



STRATEGIC PLAN 2025

Adopted April 2021

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Commute.org is a joint powers authority (JPA) comprised of 17 cities and towns as well as the County of San Mateo. Formed in 2000, the agency provides transportation demand management (TDM) programming and services to employers, residents, and commuters. Funding comes from a variety of local and regional public sources as well as contributions from private-sector participants in the agency's first/last mile shuttle program.

This plan was developed over the past 15 months and is intended to guide the agency through fiscal year 2025. The board of directors and agency staff want to emphasize that the plan is designed to be purposefully dynamic. Every effort will be made to meet the goals and objectives set forth in the plan, but course corrections and adjustments are anticipated and mechanisms for managing those changes are built in to the plan.

Please help us be the best we can be by providing feedback on the plan and on our performance.

MISSION

Our mission is to reduce traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions while enhancing the quality of life in San Mateo County by promoting the use of sustainable transportation and commute alternatives.

VISION

We envision a region where all residents and employees have access to equitable, sustainable, affordable, and safe transportation options and use them as their primary modes when commuting.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Our actions and decision-making are based on the following principles:

- Equity – we work to change practices, structures, and policies to realize transportation equity for commuters in San Mateo County
- Sustainability – we undertake our work knowing that making meaningful progress on reducing environmentally harmful commuting is time critical

- Leadership – we embrace our role as the leading resource for transportation demand management (TDM) programs and services in San Mateo County
- Collaboration – we partner with public, private, and non-profit organizations to drive the movement of commuters to sustainable alternatives
- Accountability and Transparency – we commit to the open and continual assessment of our actions, programs, governance, and outcomes
- Viability – we continually develop our human and financial resources to ensure that we have the people and means to succeed
- Investment – we invest in our people, systems, and processes to drive innovation, effectiveness, and financial stewardship
- Alliance – we are a coalition of municipalities working for the mutual benefit of all members

STRATEGIC ADVANTAGES

As part of the strategic planning process, we engaged in a detailed SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis. The following advantages were identified by our stakeholders as the primary reasons why we are uniquely positioned to lead San Mateo County's TDM efforts:

- Structure – we are an independent JPA formed as a coalition of 17 cities/towns and the County of San Mateo with a mandate to focus on TDM.
- Credibility – we were founded in 2000 and have become a well-known, respected, and trusted transportation resource in the county and throughout the Bay Area.
- Flexibility – our structure and governance model allow us to rapidly adapt to changing conditions.
- Creativity – for TDM programs to be successful it is necessary to change people's behavior. The first step in that process is capturing their attention. Our marketing, media, and programming is award-winning in quality and continually evolving.
- Connections – we have developed and maintained strong collaborative relationships with the private sector, transportation agencies, advocacy organizations, and our JPA members.

STATEMENT ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Commute.org is committed to and accountable for advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in all its forms. As a public agency serving a diverse community:

- We acknowledge our past and current shortcomings around diversity and inclusion.
- We will foster and maintain a safe environment of respect and inclusion for staff and members of the communities we serve.
- We will educate our staff to be transportation equity advocates, creatively providing programs and environments that reflect the diversity of our community and elevate cultural awareness.
- We will ensure fair and inclusive access to our programs, resources, and services, and ensure that our policies and practices are equitable and available to commuters at all socioeconomic levels.
- We will advance and build our staff by assessing hiring practices and performance review procedures to attract, retain, and develop talented staff from diverse backgrounds.

STAKEHOLDERS

As a first step in the strategic planning process, we did an assessment of our current and potential stakeholders. Within each stakeholder sub-category, we identified individuals and organizations who were invited to contribute to the planning process. Numerous surveys, focus groups, and interviews were conducted to ensure that feedback we received reflected the diversity of the organizations and commuters that we serve.

Category	Sub-Category
Commuters	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shuttle passengers• Essential, frontline, and shift workers• Office, lab, government, and education workers• Residents commuting to other counties
Employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employers by industry (e.g., tech, hospitality, health care)• Employers by geography (e.g., Coastside/Bayside)• Employers by size (e.g., small, medium, large)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essential/Frontline employers • Property owners/developers/managers (commercial and residential)
JPA Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cities • Towns • County of San Mateo • Prospective members
Funders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C/CAG • San Mateo County Transit District • San Mateo County Transportation Authority • Bay Area Air Quality Management District • MTC • Private-sector shuttle funders
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TMA's • Transit agencies • Economic development orgs (e.g., SAMCEDA, chambers) • Environmental orgs (e.g., Sustainable San Mateo County) • Regional TDM agencies/organizations • Residential developers including non-profit housing organizations • Advocacy/Planning orgs (e.g., SPUR, Transform, SVBC) • Safe Routes to Schools • TDM and transportation consultancies
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commuter Programs Team • Employer Programs Team • Shuttle Program Team • Administration

On behalf of everyone who was involved in putting together this plan, we would like to thank the stakeholders who contributed to the input process. The plan is significantly better because of their contributions.

CORE STRATEGIES

Once the SWOT analysis (Appendix A) and stakeholder feedback phases were complete, the Strategic Plan Steering Committee and agency staff worked with a facilitator to develop a set of Core Strategies that would establish the underpinning of the plan.

The Core Strategies were then further refined by staff with the assistance of a consulting team from OnStrategy (Reno, NV). Some of the original strategies were developed into goals within the objectives, while others were used to support more focused and measurable goals.

Organizational

- **DIVERSIFY REVENUE:** Broaden the sources of funding to support current and future programming.
- **MAINTAIN STRONG BALANCE SHEET:** Conservatively manage reserves while addressing the long-term financial obligations of the agency.
- **MEASURE PROGRAM PERFORMANCE:** Use advanced financial metrics to measure program performance and shift current metrics to also include equity metrics and ensure measurements and objectives are cohesive and not in competition with each other.
- **COMPLETE THE ALLIANCE:** Create compelling reasons for the remaining cities and towns to join the Alliance and bring them into the agency.
- **PROVIDE THE RIGHT TECHNOLOGY:** Maximize agency productivity through efficient use of new technology.
- **BE THE CONVENER:** Create a forum for county and regional organizations to meet and advance policy and programs that support TDM and the increased use of public transit.
- **BE THE RESOURCE:** Become the go-to resource for TDM related policymaking, programming, and monitoring for our JPA members and their site-specific as well as their jurisdictional TDM activities.

Programs and Services

- **ADAPT TO CHANGE:** Advocate fiercely for an efficient and effective first/last mile transportation program that encourages use of public transit and adapt to the impending management, operational and grant funding changes in the existing shuttle program.
- **CAPITALIZE ON CHANGE:** Use the pandemic-induced shift to remote work and bicycling to realize not only lasting reductions in VMT, but also improvements in commuters' mental and physical well-being.
- **EXPAND THE PLATFORM:** Engage with TDM agencies and organizations around the Bay Area to provide integrated, seamless technology and programming that supports regional commuters and their employers.
- **ADVOCATE:** Use our standing as a leading voice in the TDM space to advocate for legislation, policies, and funding that aligns with our mission and objectives.
- **BUILD THE BASE:** Expand the breadth and diversity (size, industry type, and geographic location) of the employers who actively engage with the agency.
- **BE THE COUNTY'S MICROMOBILITY RESOURCE:** Actively engage with vendors, researchers, policymakers, and constituents to provide JPA members the information and tools they need to advance micromobility solutions within jurisdictions and across jurisdictional boundaries.

People and Culture

- **LISTEN & LEARN:** Self-educate all levels of the agency on the barriers to equitable, safe, and alternative commuting and support initiatives led by communities of concern before designing and implementing new equity-focused programming.
- **LEAD TO THE FUTURE:** Continue to innovate, experiment, and embrace change as transportation and technology advance.
- **INVEST IN STAFF:** Develop a team of talented, committed professionals to staff and lead the agency now and into the future.
- **EMBRACE CHANGE:** Seize the opportunity that COVID-19 has provided us by reimagining and rebuilding our culture, policies, and practices.
- **CREATE A PERFORMANCE-FOCUSED CULTURE:** As a small agency with a big mission, it is imperative that the team operates decisively and with focused intent.
- **LEAD BY EXAMPLE:** Inspire our stakeholders by modeling the behavior and actions we take as a public agency, employer, and transportation provider.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Commute.org's Strategic Plan 2025 is comprised of four strategic objectives. Those objectives are listed below and are described in more detail in the following pages.

In developing the strategic objectives, the contributors struck a balance between the known challenges and opportunities and the uncertainty that exists due to covid-19 and other external factors. The product is an aggressive plan that will challenge our staff, board, and stakeholders yet provides for ongoing adjustments and refinements as circumstances dictate.

Each of the Strategic Objectives is supported by a set of goals. For a goal to make it into the plan, it had to be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely.



Ensure Organizational Sustainability



Integrate Equity Principles Across All Programs



Develop Programs and Services to Meet Emergent Challenges and Opportunities



Expand Participation in Core Programs

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #1

Ensure Organizational Sustainability

Goals

- Diversify revenue by adding new services and securing new grant funds
- Complete the alliance by bringing in the three non-member cities to the JPA
- Invest in systems and processes to promote innovation, effectiveness and financial stewardship
- Create a culture that assures employees are valued and their diversity reflects the community
- Develop a team that has the tools, training and support it needs to succeed
- Capture institutional knowledge documenting processes and procedures

Success Looks Like . . .

- The agency has established the financial, operational, and human resource foundations that allow it to thrive for the next decade.

Success Measures

- Balance sheet measures - reserve ratio, long-term pension obligation coverage
- Revenue sources and percentages
- JPA membership roster
- Staff turnover ratio
- Professional certification ratio
- Succession plan established / key processes documented

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #2

Integrate Equity Principles Across All Programs

Goals

- Establish equity principles and priorities
- Ensure that the county's geographic and industry diversity are addressed
- Develop metrics to measure agency performance based on equity principles
- Strengthen programs and services by resolving equity issues and integrating principles

Success Looks Like . . .

- The agency's programs, services, actions, and advocacy align with the goals of the equity principles and are continually measured to ensure compliance.

Success Measures

- Consensus on principles is achieved in first year
- Initial metrics are developed and adopted in first year
- Baselines for existing programs and services are measured in FY22
- Progress on achieving equity goals is continuously measured

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #3

Develop Programs and Services to Meet Emergent Challenges and Opportunities

Goals

- Expand engagement beyond employers to include strategic partnerships with new commuter stakeholder groups
- Develop engagement programs and services that address the needs of underserved sectors and communities within San Mateo County
- Increase San Mateo County workforce and residents represented by engaged entities and partners
- Develop programs and services to support C/CAG and JPA members with TDM compliance initiatives
- Restructure the shuttle program to maximize efficiency while minimizing risks to the agency

Success Looks Like . . .

- The agency has developed the programs and organizational structure that allow it to efficiently, effectively, and equitably provide measurable benefits to its program participants, funders, and JPA members.

Success Measures

- Entity engagement metrics - redefined
- Partner-level engagement metrics (TBD)
- TDM compliance program satisfaction surveys
- Equity goals applied to engagement program efforts and outcomes
- Agency and program awareness measurements from non-engaged entity survey data
- Risk mitigation with shuttle program changes

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #4

Expand Participation in Core Programs

Goals

- Grow the number of active program participants
- Grow the number of new STAR platform registrations year over year
- Develop tools and methodologies to measure program impacts on SOV, VMT, and GHG
- Achieve an 80% or higher rating on program participant satisfaction surveys
- Participation in core programs reflects diversity of San Mateo County workforce

Success Looks Like . . .

- Annual increases in commuter program participation and SOV/VMT/GHG reductions that meet or exceed targets.

Success Measures

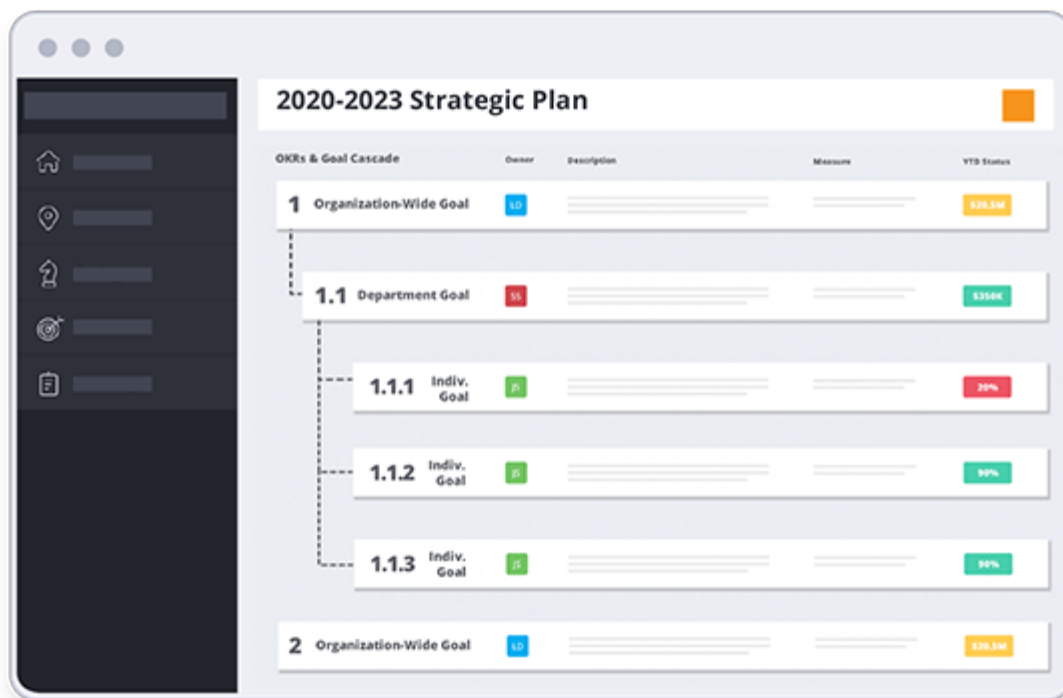
- STAR platform reporting for participation by program and registrations
- Survey data measuring satisfaction with commuter programs
- Equity goals applied to program participation and reward distribution
- Agency and program “awareness” measurements from non-participant survey data

PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND REPORTING

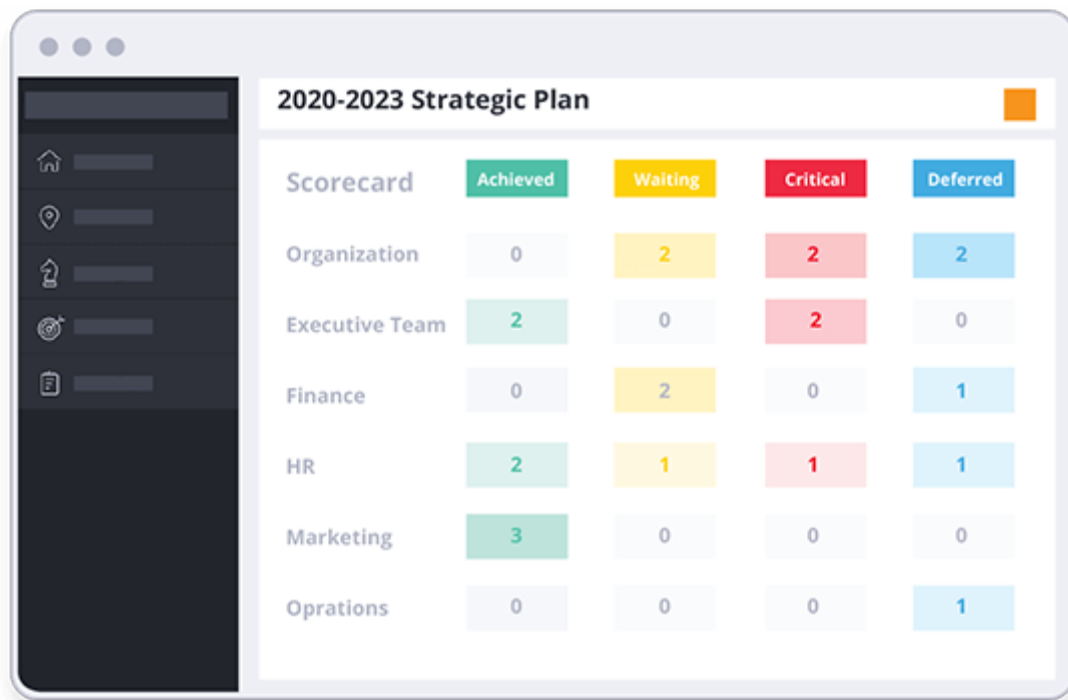
Commute.org will use the OnStrategy software platform to manage the agency's progress on meeting the goals and objectives set forth in the plan. The software will be used to assign and track progress on individual and team level initiatives. It will also be used to provide internal, stakeholder, and board-level performance reporting.

As the initiatives are finalized, they will be added to the platform, assigned to a person or team, and linked to a key performance indicator (KPI). Since each initiative includes a target completion date, the tool will be able to assist the management team in understanding where the agency is in relation to the overall timeline for the plan.

It is important to note that only items from the strategic plan will be included in this platform and reporting. The agency has many other programs, services, and activities that are not specifically included in the Strategic Plan.



OnStrategy Tool Example 1



OnStrategy Tool Example 2

APPENDIX A: SWOT ANALYSIS

STRATEGIC PLAN 2025: SWOT ANALYSIS SUMMARY

Internal

Strengths

- Recognized leader in TDM locally and regionally
- Independence - stand-alone agency with full support of the board
- Flexible and nimble - agency adapts programs, services, and structure to meet changing conditions
- Diversified funding
- Shuttle program - unique public/private funding model that emphasizes the rider
- Consistently bold and appealing communications
- Well-established commuter platform (STAR) that continues to evolve
- Collaborative work environment

External

Opportunities

- Cities (JPA members) need assistance with TDM plan monitoring, measurement, etc.
- HOV3 - managed lanes - coming to San Mateo County: will require significant efforts to get carpools up to size
- Caltrain electrification will increase frequency and ridership on the system
- Student mobility - has been and will likely always be a challenge for JPA members and their constituents
- Telework - be the expert and own it in San Mateo County (SMC)
- Become the primary resource/interface point for micro-mobility in SMC
- Expand JPA membership to include the remaining cities in San Mateo County
- Develop and/or collaborate with other county agencies on updated TDM measures
- Work with cities to develop parking requirements and programs that support TDM initiatives
- State-mandated changes from LOS to VMT means cities (JPA members) will need to promote TDM programs at a new level
- Pandemic has opened the doors to many new potential partnerships both in-county and regionally
- Partner with TDM agencies in other counties to provide an integrated commuter platform under RideAmigos
- Bay Area Commuter Benefits Program - take a more aggressive approach to compliance in San Mateo County
- Capitalize on the increased interest in biking to promote that mode post-COVID
- eBikes could be a "game-changer" in terms of expanding bicycle commuting
- Capitalize on the new communication methods (e.g., online meetings) to leverage our program offerings and resources
- TMA's will need programs that can be promoted to their members - Commute.org can supply the programs and resources as a partner to the TMA's
- Federal adoption of TDM as a defined strategy for transportation policy may create additional funds to support TDM initiatives

STRATEGIC PLAN 2025: SWOT ANALYSIS SUMMARY

Internal

Weaknesses

- Lack of engagement with small and medium sized employers
- Lack of city-specific programs (e.g., programs that add-value to the JPA members)
- Lack of effective measurements for effectiveness and efficiency of incentives
- Lack of countywide TDM requirements and/or compliance programs
- Limited flexibility on use of funds due to grant constraints
- Equity, diversity, and inclusion are not addressed in the existing strategic plan
- Many constituents still do not know that the agency exists and how it could assist
- No dedicated effort to reach commuters coming from or going to the coastal cities in the county
- Constraints due to size of agency (lack of team members to execute)
- Hybrid shuttle management structure is not sustainable
- Antiquated CRM platform with less-than-ideal employer database
- Website needs updating to make it more accessible/consistent with programs
- No succession plan for current Executive Director
- Staff does not include transportation planners
- Agency does not have staff focused on grant acquisition

External

Threats

- Current pandemic may result in severe economic downturn that takes many years to recover from
- Future pandemics and/or natural disasters
- Lack of dedicated, guaranteed sources of funding
- Reduction in funding from current sources (e.g., Measure A, TFCA)
- Shuttle management/grant structure that eliminates the agency from its current role in the countywide shuttle program
- Competition from sub-regional TMA's or other public/private organizations that evolve
- Expansion of program and service offerings that exceed the skills of the current team
- So many other programs in San Mateo County and the Bay Area that our agency gets drowned out
- Single-vendor contract for shuttles
- Expectations for the agency that may exceed the scope and resources that the agency has
- Autonomous transportation may reduce and/or eliminate the need for traditional TDM programming
- CalPERS pension program may absorb an increasing percentage of the agency's funding
- Changes in technology - both what the agency currently uses and what may be coming

APPENDIX B: STRATEGIC PLANNING TERMS

STRATEGIC PLANNING TERM	DEFINITION
Guiding Principles (Core Values)	How people want to behave with each other in the organization. Value statements describe actions that are the living enactment of the fundamental values held by most individuals within the organization. What are our guiding principles, as a group, to adhere to no matter what?
Mission Statement	The organization's core purpose. Why do we exist?
Vision Statement	Where are we headed – our future state – our big, audacious goal. What do we see as the ultimate future state in the next 5+ years?
Competitive Advantages	A characteristic(s) of an organization that allows it to meet their stakeholder's need(s) better than their competition can. What are we best at in our market?
Core Strategies	Our strategies are the general methods we intend to use to reach our vision. A strategy is like an umbrella. It is a general statement(s) that guides and covers a set of activities. A strategy answers the question "how."
Strategic Objectives	Long-term, broad, continuous statements that address all areas of our organization. If we have a five-year vision, these would be three- to four-year intermediate guideposts on the way there. What must we focus on to achieve our vision?
Strategic Goals	Specific goals directly associated with a Strategic Objective. The goals should be measurable and achievable yet challenging.
Initiatives	Short-term items that convert the Strategic Objectives into specific performance targets. Effective goals clearly state what, when, who and are specifically measurable – they are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Responsible person, time bound (SMART). What must we do to achieve our long-term Strategic Objectives?
Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Metric and non-metric measurements essential to the completion of the strategic goals. It is challenging, but necessary to narrow the possible list down to a manageable group of KPIs that make the most difference to performance. KPIs are linked to goals. How will we know we have achieved our goals?

APPENDIX C: DEFINITIONS

TERM OR ACRONYM	DEFINITION
Commute Alternatives	Substitutes for traveling between home and worksites, such as teleworking; also, flexible scheduling options allowing commuters to travel to/from work during off-peak hours or working compressed work weeks, such as working 40 hours within four workdays to reduce commute days.
GHG (greenhouse gas)	Gas that traps heat in the Earth's atmosphere and is emitted when coal, oil, or natural gas is burned to power transportation and industrial activity; top GHGs include carbon dioxide, methane, and ozone.
SOV (single-occupancy vehicle)	A car, truck, or van carrying only one individual (the driver).
TDM (transportation demand management)	A general term for strategies and policies that reduce demand for motor vehicle travel, particularly in single occupancy vehicles. TDM programs can address a wide range of externalities associated with driving, including congestion, poor air quality, less livable communities, reduced public health, reduced environmental health, and greenhouse gas emissions. Commute.org's TDM programs focus on reducing travel demand in San Mateo County particularly at peak commute hours.
TMA/TMO (transportation management association or organization)	A transportation management association (TMA), sometimes known as a transportation management organization (TMO), is an administrative body designed to manage the transportation needs of a particular venue, district, or community. In most cases, TMAs are non-profit organizations, and they are usually controlled by members; whereas, TMO's are typically governmental agencies controlled by elected boards.