



Senior and Older Adult Suicide Prevention

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Overview

- Suicide data for senior/older adults
- Suicide & Stigma
- Risk factors for suicide in seniors/older adults
- Warning Signs
- How/when to reach out
- Local support



Language & Concepts About Suicide

- **Died of/by Suicide** –The term *committed suicide* does not accurately describe that an individual died as the result of a mental health condition with a medically treatable cause, or by severe psychological distress with no apparent way out.
- **Fatal or Non-Fatal Attempt** – Language about suicide that uses illness-based language. Similar to fatal or non-fatal heart attack
- **Person with Lived Experience** – A person with lived experience of suicide who has either struggled with suicidal thoughts and/or behaviors or an attempt survivor.
- **Loss Survivor** – An individual who has lost someone they care about to suicide. Can be further bereaved by suicide, experiencing a high level of psychological, physical, and/or social distress for a long period of time
- **Suicidal Ideation** – Thinking about, considering, or making a plan to die by suicide. Can be passive or active.



A few facts...

- Among adults aged 18 or older in 2023, 5.0% (or 12.8 million people) had serious thoughts of suicide, 1.4% (or 3.7 million people) made a suicide plan, and 0.6% (or 1.5 million people) attempted suicide in the past year. There is no *single* cause of suicide. (SAMHSA)
- Suicide attempts tend to be more lethal in older adults
 - Careful planning & lethal methods
 - Other health issues
 - Less likely to be discovered and rescued



10 Leading Causes of Death, United States, 2023

2023, Both sexes, All ages, All races

	<1	1-4	5-9	10-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	All Ages
1	Congenital Anomalies 4,005	Unintentional Injury 1,275	Unintentional Injury 684	Unintentional Injury 914	Unintentional Injury 14,126	Unintentional Injury 30,163	Unintentional Injury 36,159	Malignant Neoplasms 32,867	Malignant Neoplasms 101,714	Heart Disease 554,413	Heart Disease 680,981
2	Short Gestation 2,922	Congenital Anomalies 426	Malignant Neoplasms 387	Suicide 481	Suicide 5,936	Suicide 8,453	Heart Disease 11,528	Unintentional Injury 30,559	Heart Disease 79,726	Malignant Neoplasms 461,345	Malignant Neoplasms 613,352
3	SIDS 1,445	Homicide 275	Congenital Anomalies 210	Malignant Neoplasms 463	Homicide 5,745	Homicide 5,828	Malignant Neoplasms 11,291	Heart Disease 30,430	Unintentional Injury 33,710	Cerebrovascular 140,813	Unintentional Injury 222,698
4	Unintentional Injury 1,291	Malignant Neoplasms 269	Homicide 187	Homicide 338	Malignant Neoplasms 1,463	Malignant Neoplasms 3,503	Suicide 8,533	Liver Disease 8,866	Diabetes Mellitus 15,958	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 125,603	Cerebrovascular 162,639
5	Maternal Pregnancy Comp. 1,141	Influenza & Pneumonia 142	Heart Disease 77	Congenital Anomalies 192	Heart Disease 835	Heart Disease 3,474	Liver Disease 5,013	Suicide 7,653	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 15,748	Alzheimer's Disease 112,548	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 145,357
6	Bacterial Sepsis 621	Heart Disease 131	Influenza & Pneumonia 67	Heart Disease 96	Congenital Anomalies 443	Liver Disease 1,626	Homicide 4,487	Diabetes Mellitus 6,653	Liver Disease 14,764	Unintentional Injury 73,804	Alzheimer's Disease 114,034
7	Placenta Cord Membranes 569	Septicemia 68	Septicemia 52	Cerebrovascular 66	Diabetes Mellitus 259	Diabetes Mellitus 1,110	Diabetes Mellitus 2,604	Cerebrovascular 5,364	Cerebrovascular 13,425	Diabetes Mellitus 68,550	Diabetes Mellitus 95,190
8	Respiratory Distress 449	Perinatal Period 54	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 46	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 58	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 219	Cerebrovascular 579	Cerebrovascular 2,057	Chronic Low. Respiratory Disease 2,641	Suicide 7,816	Nephritis 45,200	Nephritis 55,253
9	Intrauterine Hypoxia 365	Cerebrovascular 53	Cerebrovascular 37	Influenza & Pneumonia 48	Cerebrovascular 162	Complicated Pregnancy 522	Septicemia 987	Homicide 2,571	Nephritis 6,196	COVID-19 44,097	Liver Disease 52,222
10	Circulatory System Disease 356	COVID-19 44	COVID-19 26	Diabetes Mellitus 35	Influenza & Pneumonia 157	Influenza & Pneumonia 458	Influenza & Pneumonia 967	Nephritis 2,442	Septicemia 5,665	Parkinson's Disease 39,238	COVID-19 49,932

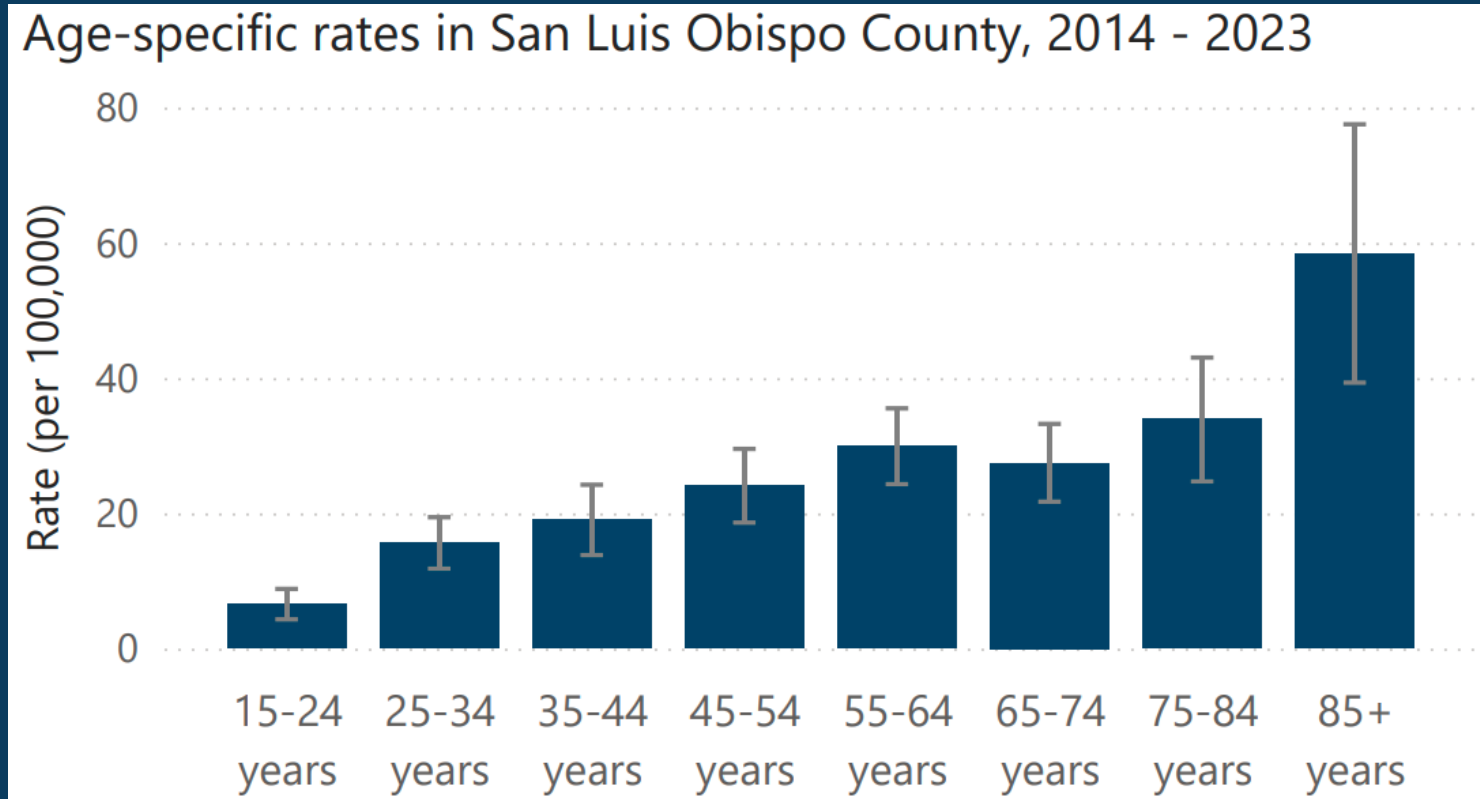
** indicates Unstable values

Data Source: National Vital Statistics System, National Center for Health Statistics, CDC.

Produced by: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, CDC using WISQARS.

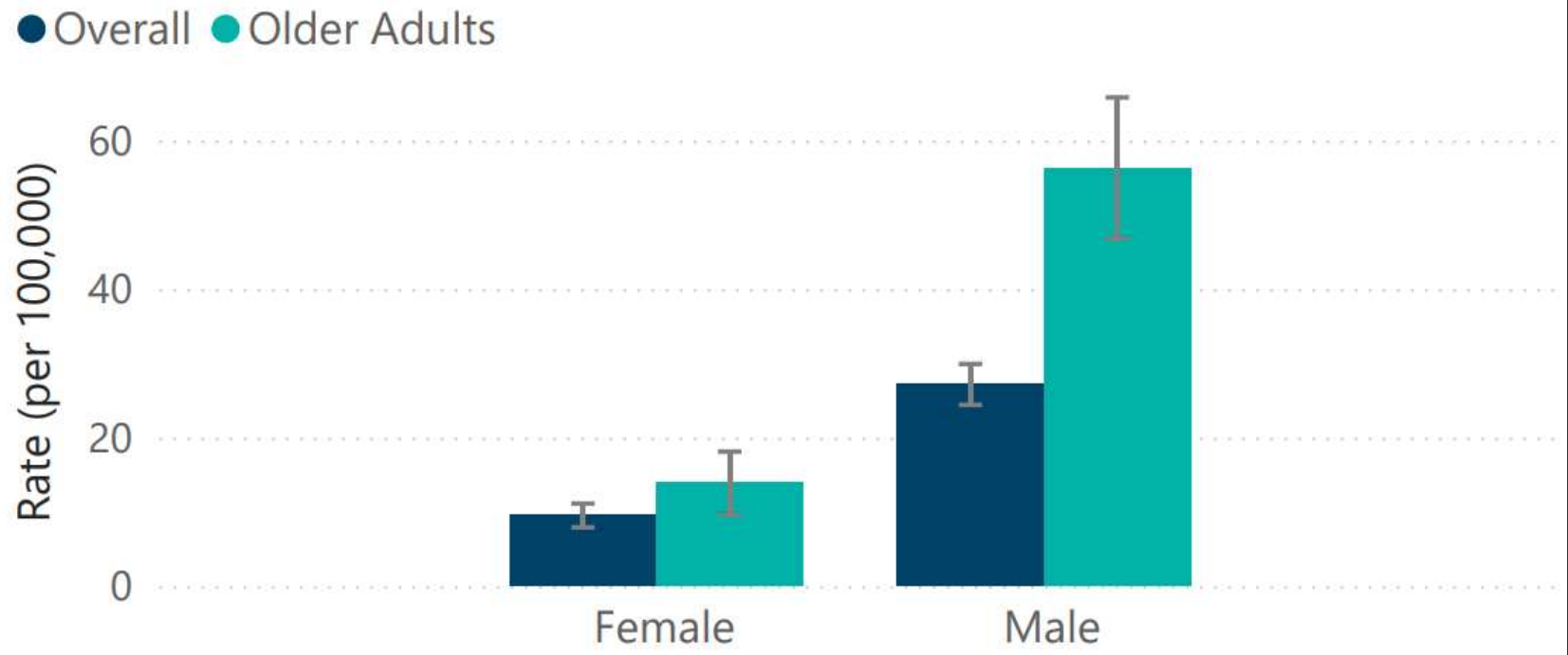


Older adults have the highest rate of deaths by suicide



Males have a higher rate than females, which is exaggerated among older males

Rate by sex in San Luis Obispo County, 2014 - 2023



Among older adults, rate is similar across county regions

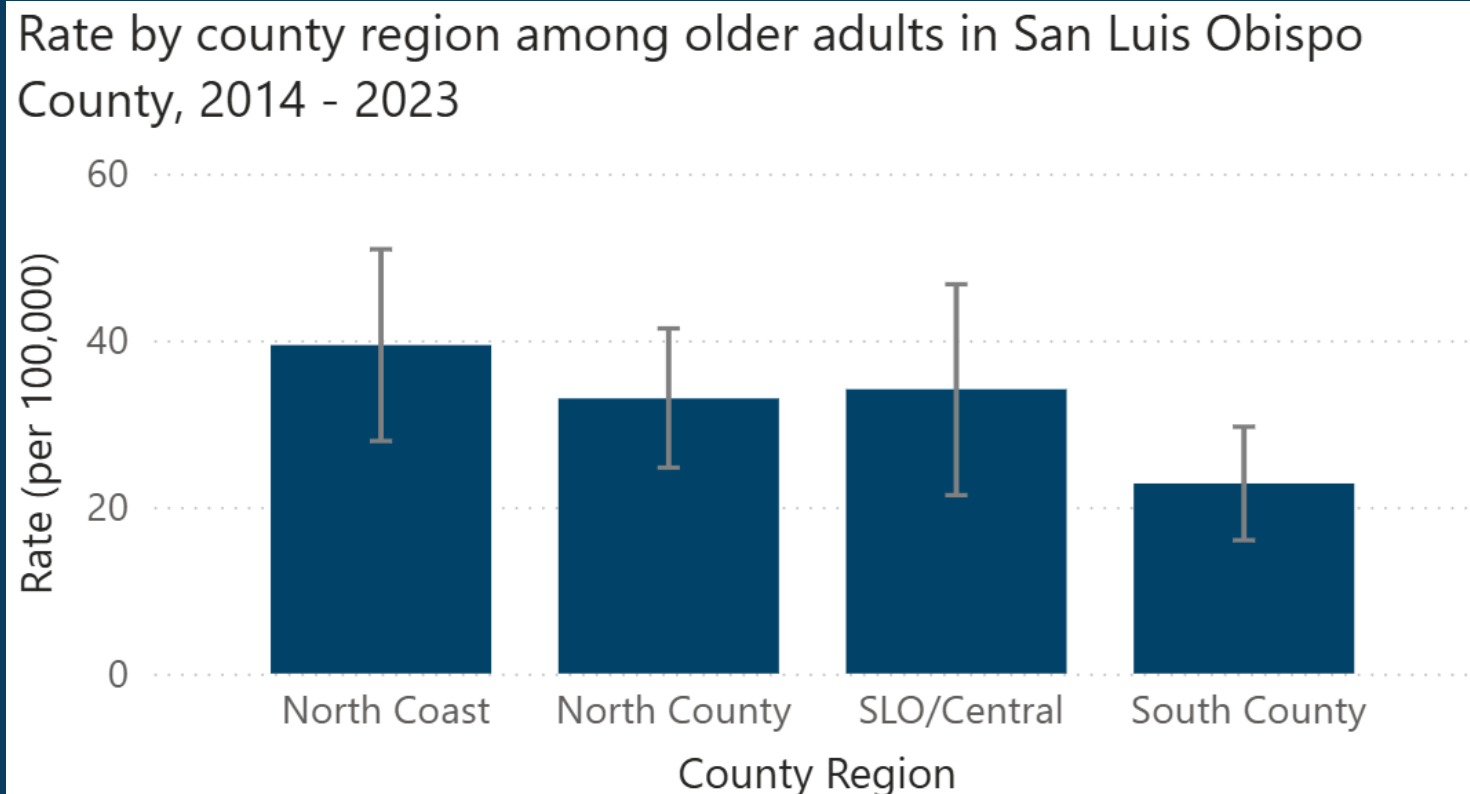


Table 1 Older Adult Suicide Circumstances in Participating CalVDRS Counties

Circumstance	Males	Females
Contributing physical health condition	50%	32%
Current mental health problem, most commonly depression	33%	57%
History of treatment for a mental health or substance use problem	15%	31%
History of suicidal thoughts or plans	36%	43%
History of suicide attempts	9%	25%

- In 2021, 31 of 58 counties participated in CalVDRS. Supplemental multi-source CalVDRS data were abstracted for 569 of the 904 older adult suicides in California in 2021.

**37% had a known history of suicidal thoughts and/or plans;
8% had a family member or friend die recently;
4% had a financial problem that appeared to contribute to their death;
More than 20% disclosed their suicide thoughts and/or plans to someone in their personal or professional circle prior to their death.**

Suicide & Stigma

- Suicide death is stigmatized across all age groups
 - Often seen as being 'weak'
 - Sometimes seen as the person was 'selfish'
- Older adults were raised in a time where it was still considered a 'sin' and was often considered 'illegal'
- We see higher rates in men than women, why?

Risk Factors

- Depression & other mental health problems
- Substance use disorder (alcohol & prescription medication)
- Physical illness, disability, and pain (especially if any of these are chronic)
- Social isolation & loneliness
- Loss of a loved one, especially to suicide
- Financial & food insecurity
- Exposure to a traumatic event

Protective Factors

- Strengthen economic supports
 - Strengthen household financial security
 - Housing stabilization policies
- Strengthen access and delivery of suicide care
 - Coverage of mental health conditions in health insurance policies
 - Reduce provider shortages in underserved areas
 - Safer suicide care through systems change
- Create protective environments
 - Reduce access to lethal means among persons at risk of suicide
 - Community-based policies to reduce excessive alcohol use

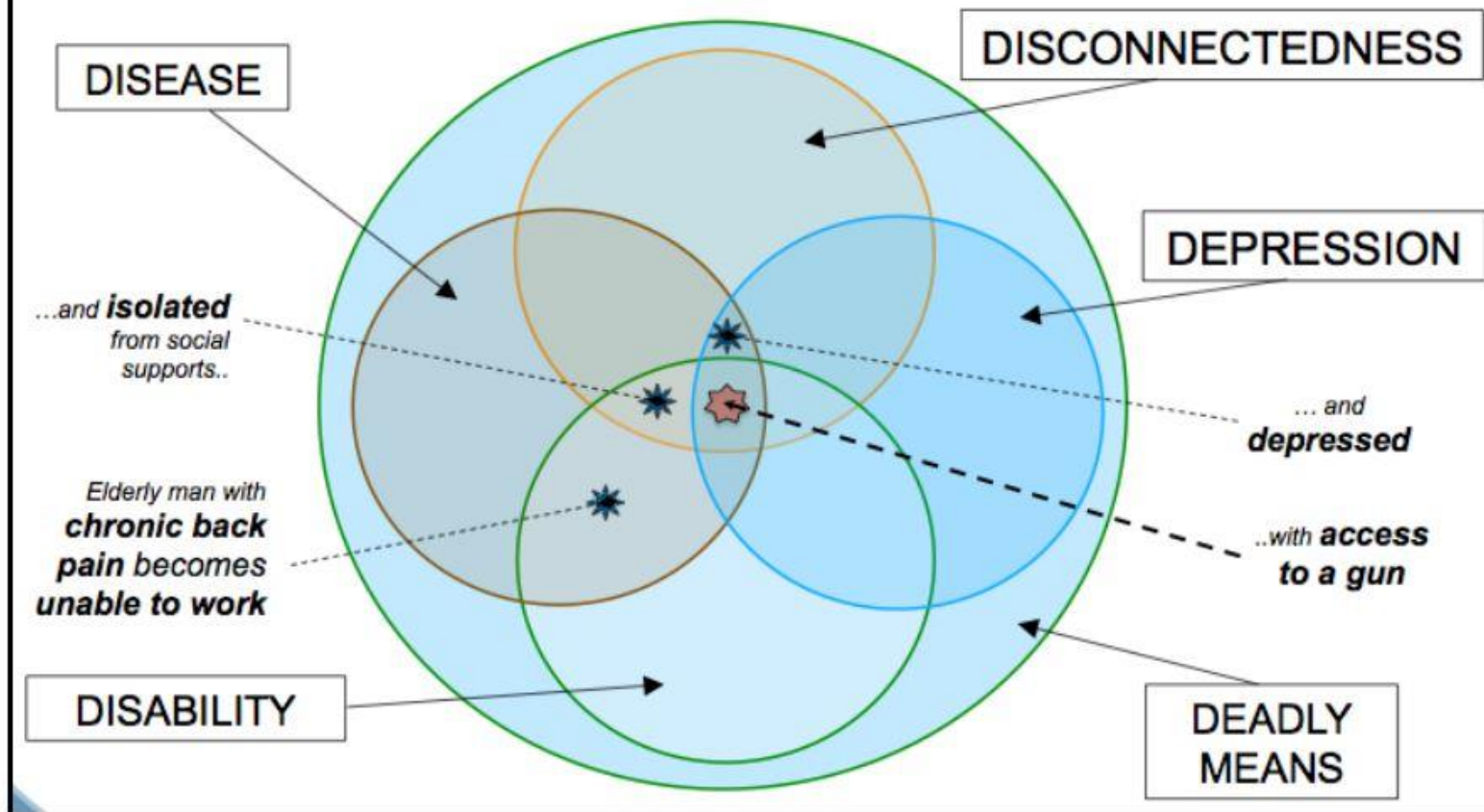


Protective Factors

- Promote connectedness
 - Peer programs
 - Community engagement activities
- Teach coping and problem-solving skills
 - Social-emotional learning programs
 - Family relationship programs
- Identify and support people at risk
 - Gatekeeper training
 - Crisis intervention
 - Treatment for people at risk of suicide
 - Treatment to prevent re-attempts



THE “5 Ds” OF LATE LIFE SUICIDE



**Depression
is not
a necessary
part of aging.**

suicideispreventable.org



COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO

www.slocounty.ca.gov

Warning Signs of Suicide

- Talking about wanting to die or about suicide
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live
- Looking for ways to kill oneself
- Loss of interest in activities that used to be enjoyable
- Cutting back on self-care and grooming
- Being alone for long periods of time, becoming isolated
- Breaking medical regimens or skipping appointments
- Feeling hopeless or worthless
- When combined with other warning signs, giving things away, or making changes in will
- Obtaining lethal means such as firearms or stock-piling medication
- Preoccupation with death or lack of concern about personal safety
- Increased use of alcohol or other substances
- Changes in sleep (either “too much” or “too little”)



When to reach out...

- If you see one or more of these warning signs, it's time to reach out
- Start the conversation
 - *Mention the warning signs you are noticing*
 - *"I noticed..."*
- Ask about suicide, be direct
 - *"Are you thinking about suicide/killing yourself?"*
- Listen
 - *Express concern, nonverbal communication, reassure*



Crisis Resources

- ***Central Coast Hotline*** (call or text) 800-783-0607
- ***National Suicide Prevention Lifeline*** (call or text) 988
- ***National Friendship Line*** (People Aged 60+)
 - call 1-888-670-1360
- ***Mobile Crisis Team (MCT)***
 - Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. To request an MCT response, call the Central Coast Hotline at 1-800-783-0607.



Local Support

- ***County Behavioral Health*** call (805) 781-4768
- ***Habitat for Humanity***
 - Home Preservation Program
 - Low-income senior homeowner repairs
- ***Transitions-Mental Health Association***
 - Family Support, Work Programs, Central Coast Hotline, Community Programs, Mental Health Services, and Adult Full Service Partnership programs
- ***Hospice of SLO County***
 - Care Management Services, In-Home Support, Grief Counseling, Pet Peace of Mind, & more!



Local Roads First: Improving SLO County Transportation

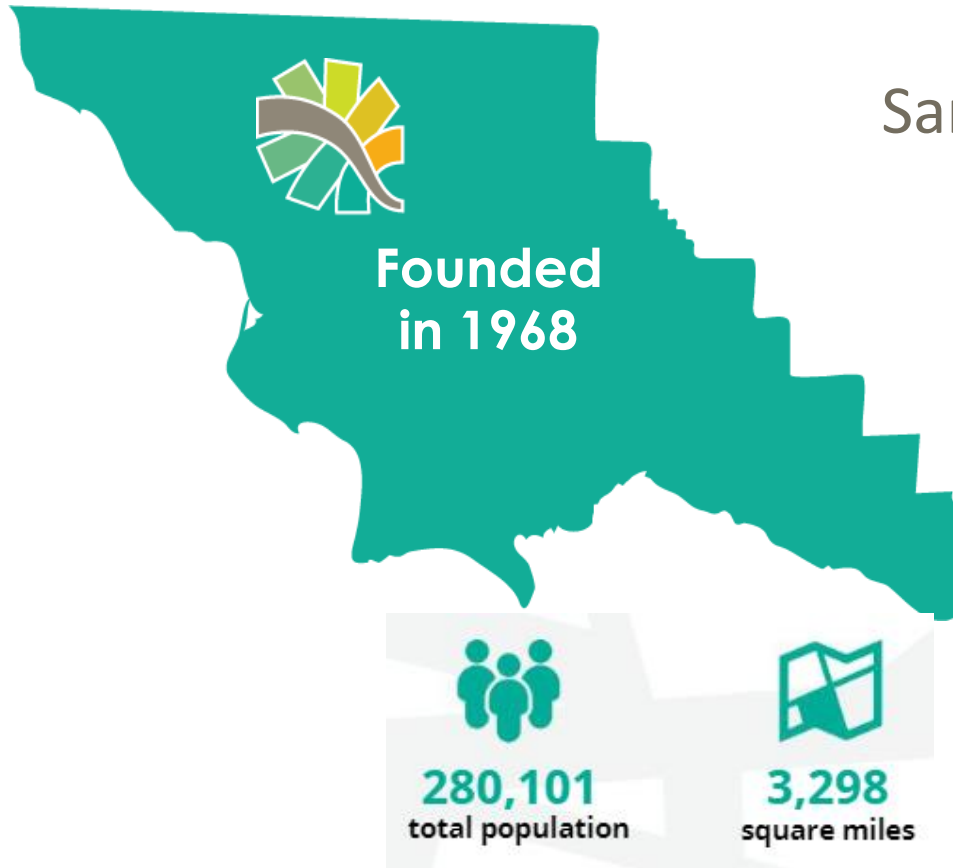
Developing a Draft
Transportation Investment
Plan

Summer 2025



Introduction to SLOCOG

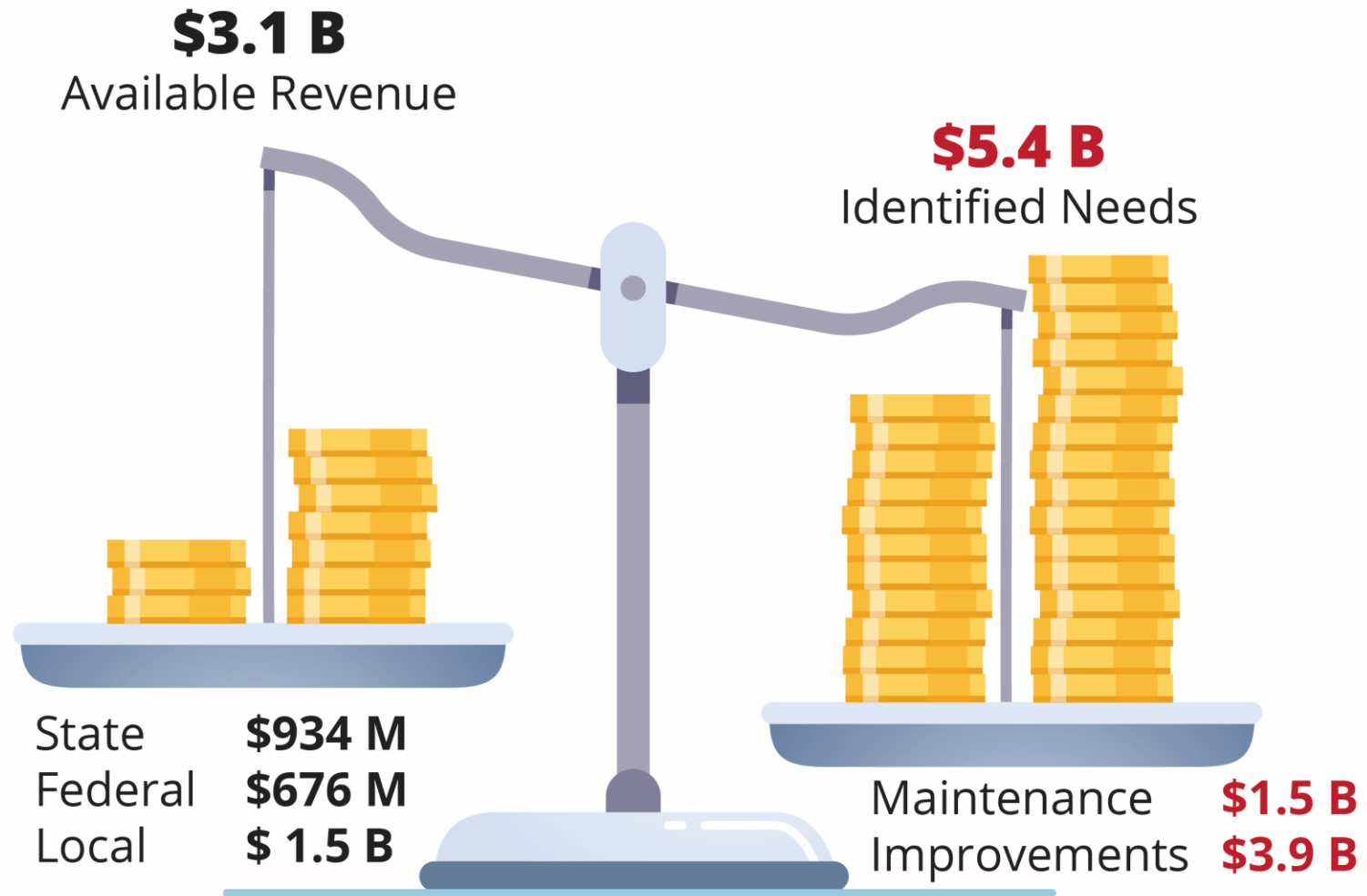
Connecting Communities (7 cities & SLO County)



San Luis Obispo County & 7 Cities

- Arroyo Grande
- Atascadero
- Grover Beach
- Morro Bay
- Paso Robles
- Pismo Beach
- San Luis Obispo

23-Year Outlook Unfunded Need



Funding Shortfall = \$2.3 Billion

The why: A Shrinking Fuel Tax

1970s, '80s, '90s:
More cars & people &
travel meant more
Revenues

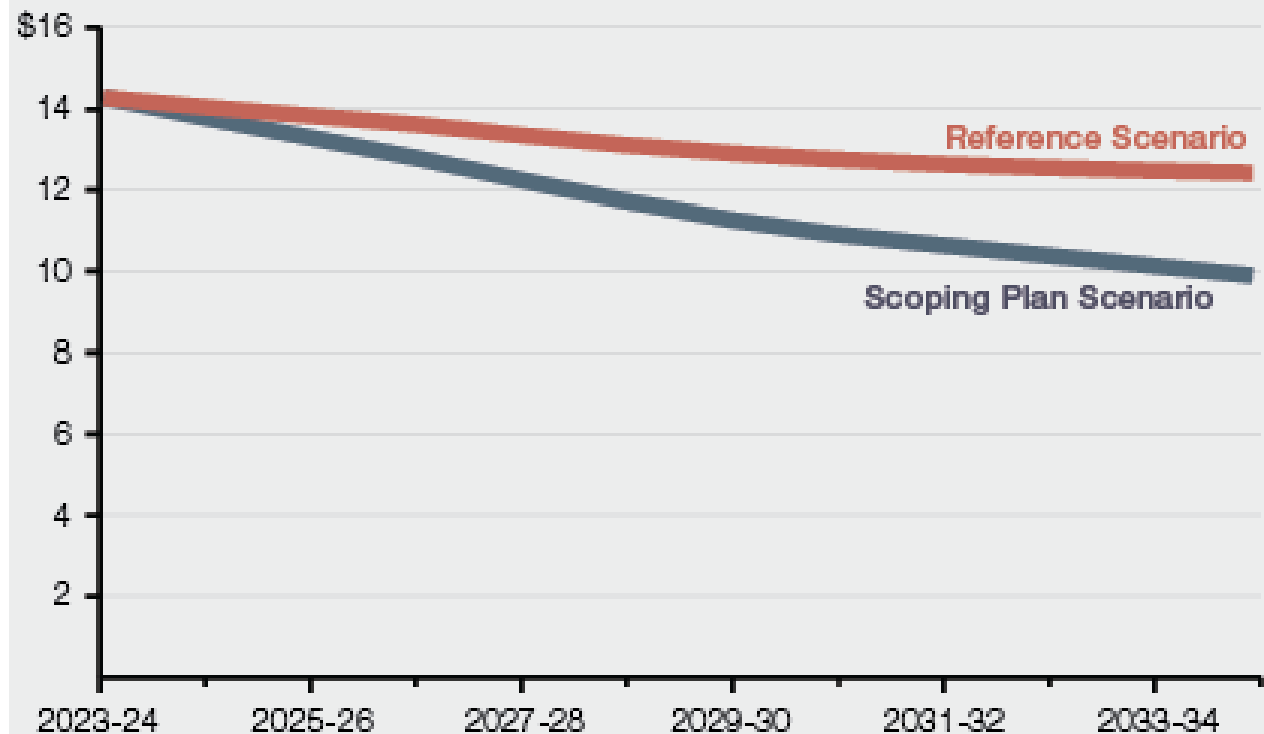
2001-2024+
Hybrids + EVs means
Gas Tax Revenues
decline

**2023 & 2024: EVs were
25% of all new car sales**

2035 and beyond
No new gas/diesel cars
to be sold in CA

Overall Transportation Revenues Projected to Decline Significantly

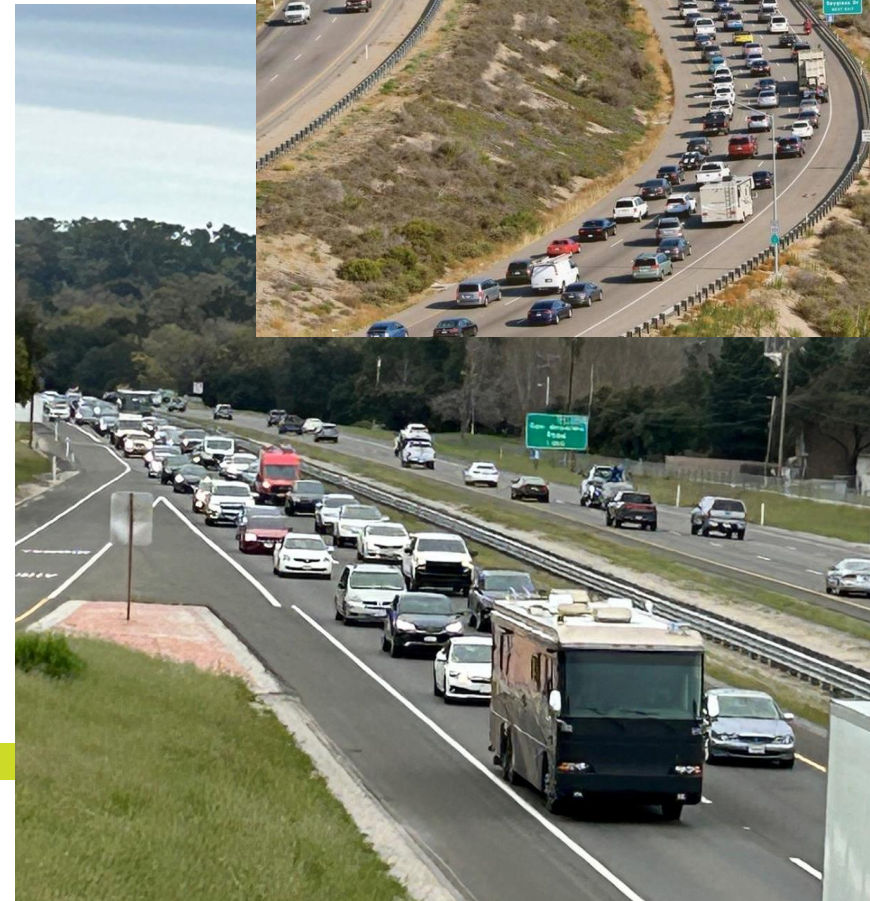
Inflation-Adjusted Dollars (In Billions)



Major Delays to ...ACTION

All projects and repairs get stuck in a queue – delays result in higher costs

- Highway Improvements and interchanges
- Safety Improvements
- Repairs and Maintenance
- And more



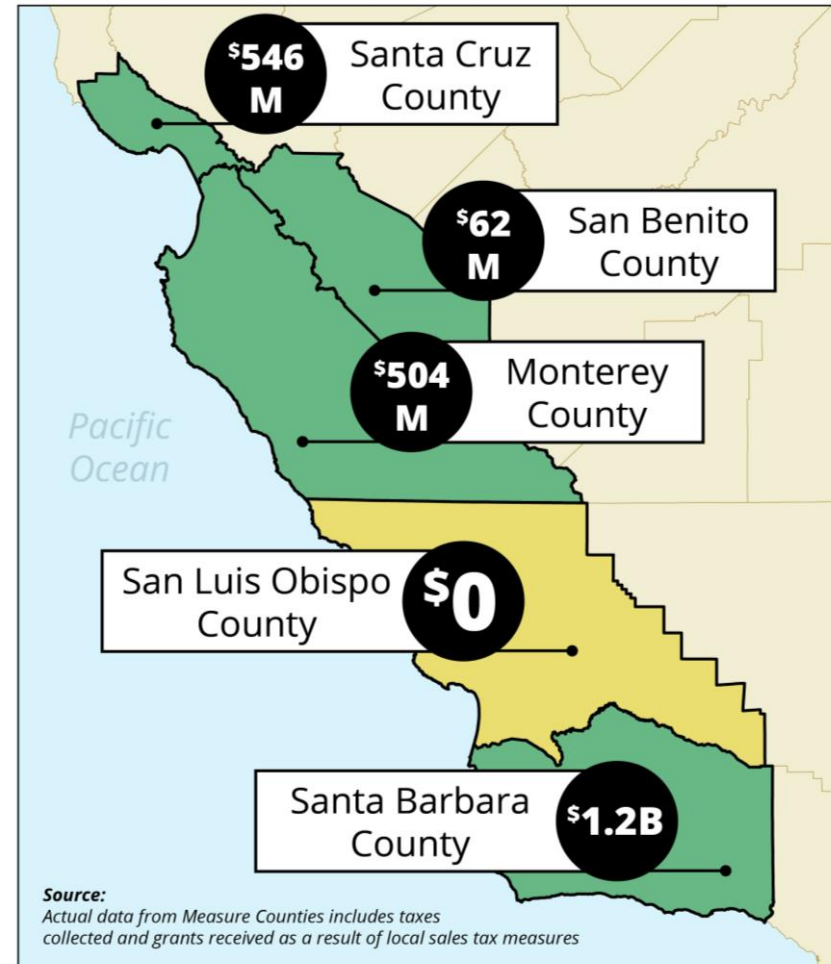
What our Neighbors Have Invested Since 2016.....

Currently, 25 Counties (89% of Californians) **HAVE** a Voter-approved Transportation Tax

Region	Collected	Grants Won
Santa Cruz	\$196M	\$350M
Monterey	\$277M	\$227M
Santa Barbara	\$458M	\$759M
SLO	\$0	\$0
Lost out on	\$270M	\$430M

Total Transportation Tax Funding Impacts by County (2016-2025)

Based on actual sales tax revenue and competitive grants won



Version 8/2025

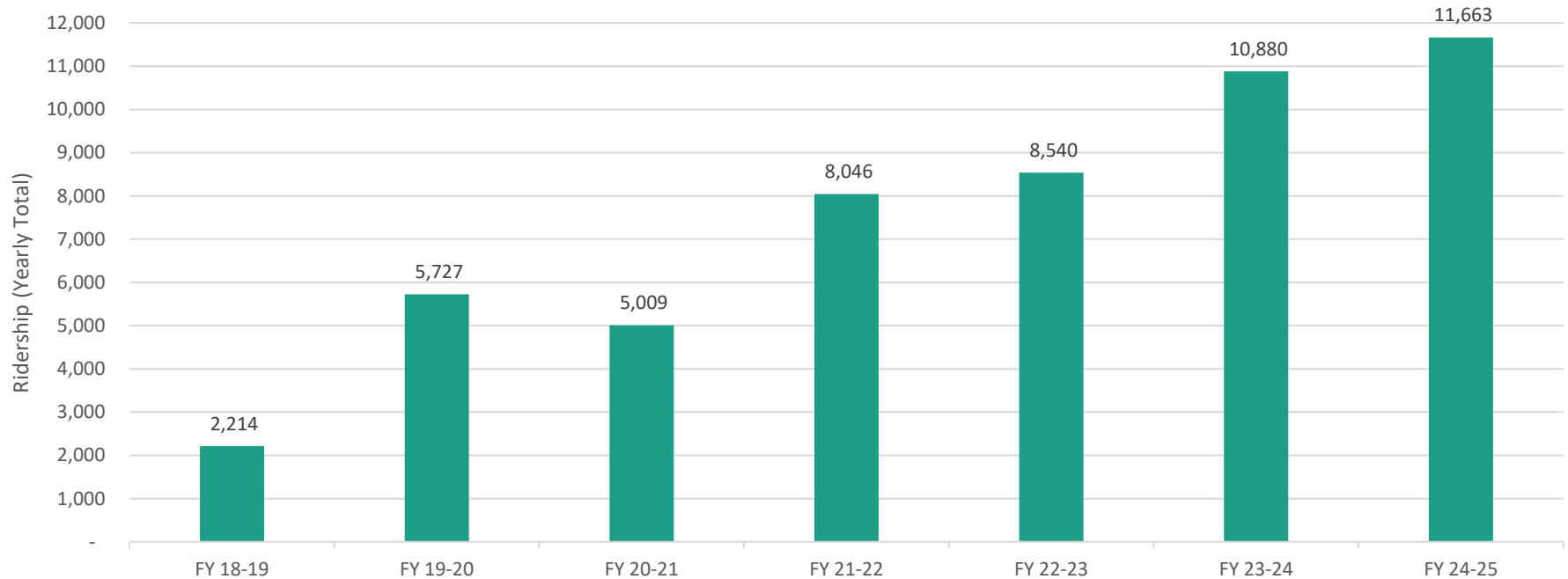
Working toward a Balanced and Fair Investment Plan

- Next chance is November 2026
- We don't want to miss out again
- Improve transportation for SLO County's future with a voter-approved dedicated transportation sales tax.
- Visitors pay too - helping fund local projects!

Senior Transportation and Mobility

- To be included in the investment plan
- Why more senior mobility funding is needed:
 - Demand Increase
 - Cost increase
 - Closing of programs such a
Wilshire Good Neighbor Program

Senior Transportation and Mobility



What matters most in your community?

OUR ASK: Tell us what you want in a voter approved investment plan



localroadsfirst.com

Initiated by
SLOCOG

Local Roads First

Improve SLO County
Transportation

- Hwy. & Safety Upgrades
- Road Repairs
- Regional Trails
- Bus/Ped. Updates



SLOCOG

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Local Road Maintenance Issues Persist



SLO: 73

Pismo Beach: 67

Morro Bay: 60

Arroyo Grande: 57

Atascadero: 57

Paso Robles: 54

Grover Beach: 52

County roads
10+ year trend:

63 in 2013

64 in 2017

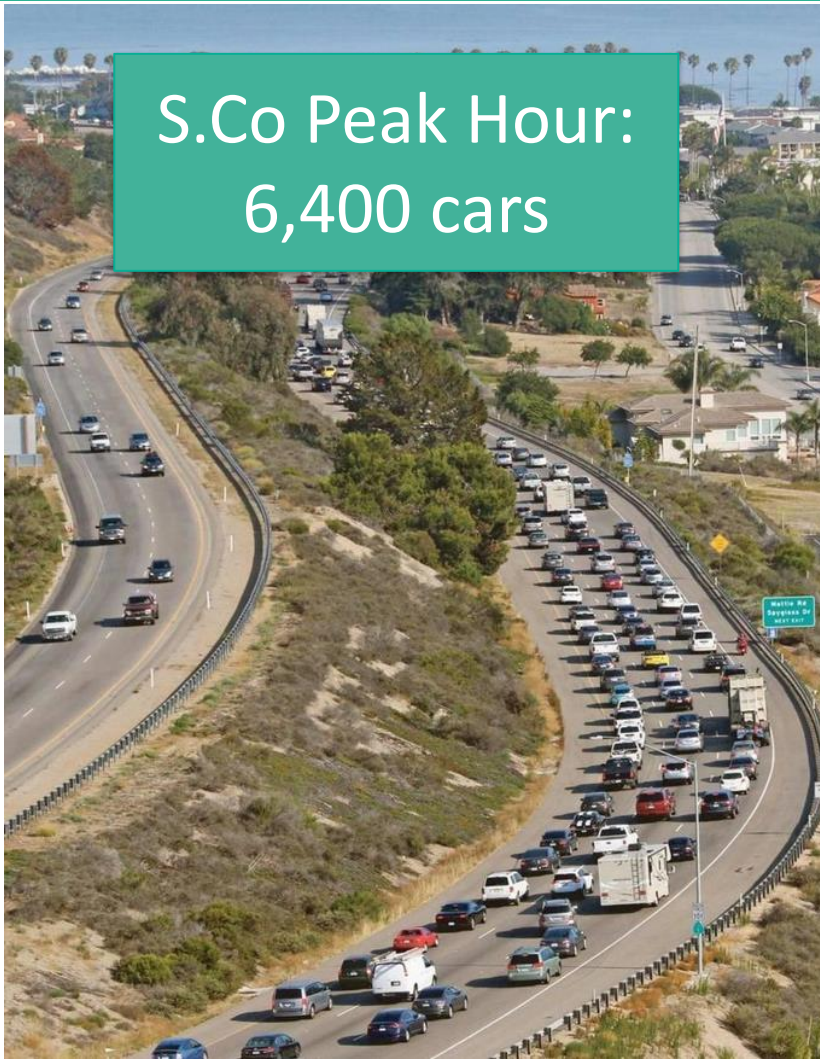
60 in 2020

60 in 2022

60 in 2025

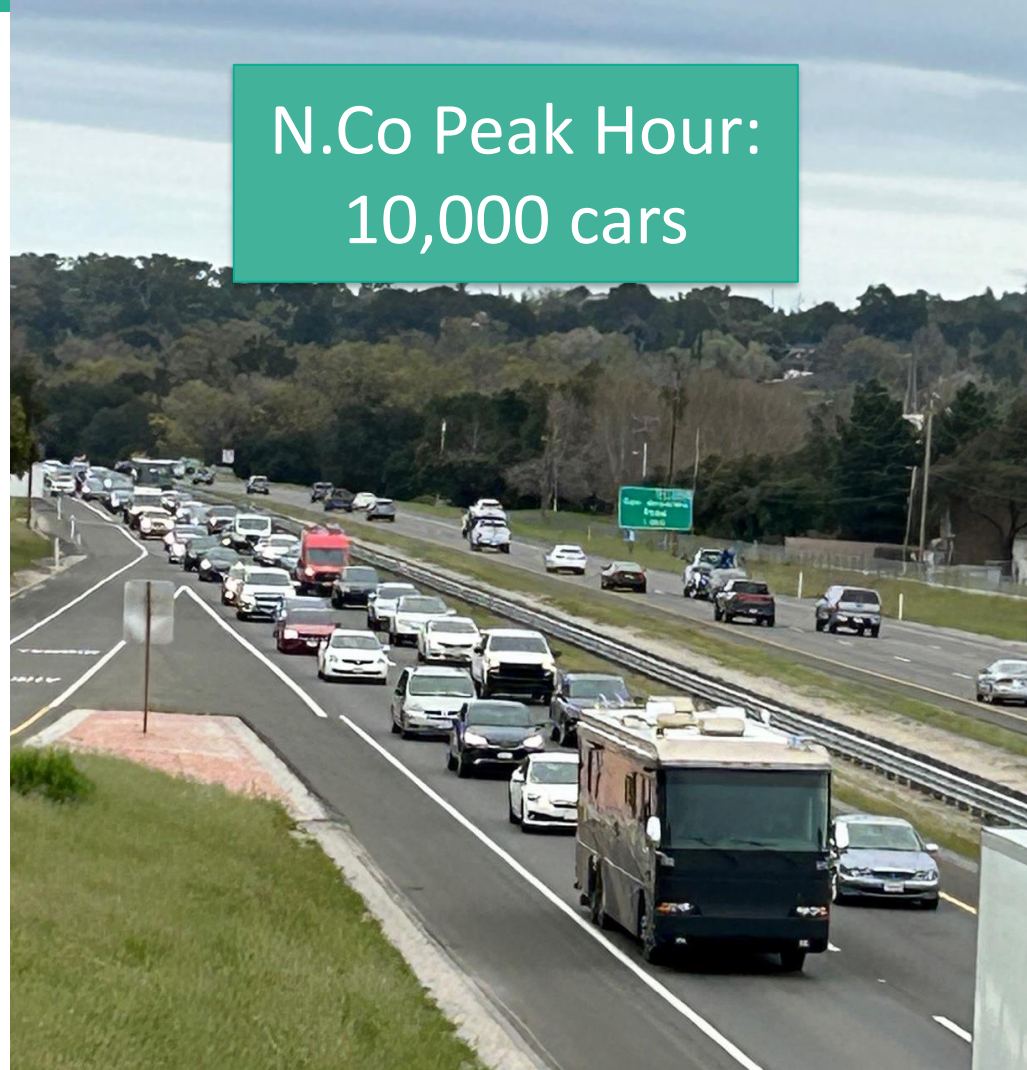
Highway Congestion

S.Co Peak Hour:
6,400 cars



Shell Beach: South of Avila Beach Rd

N.Co Peak Hour:
10,000 cars



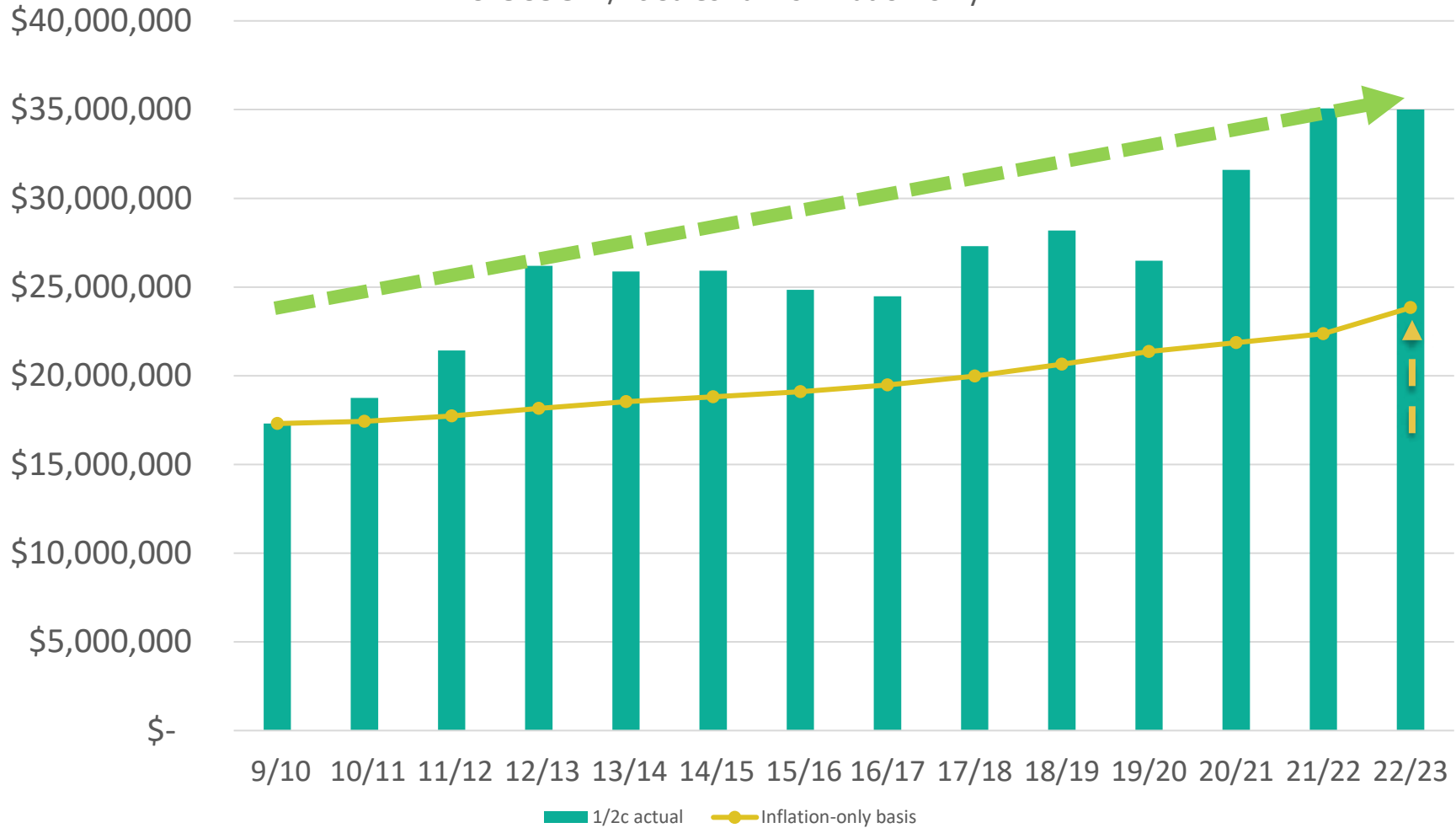
Atascadero: North of San Anselmo

Key County Transportation Needs

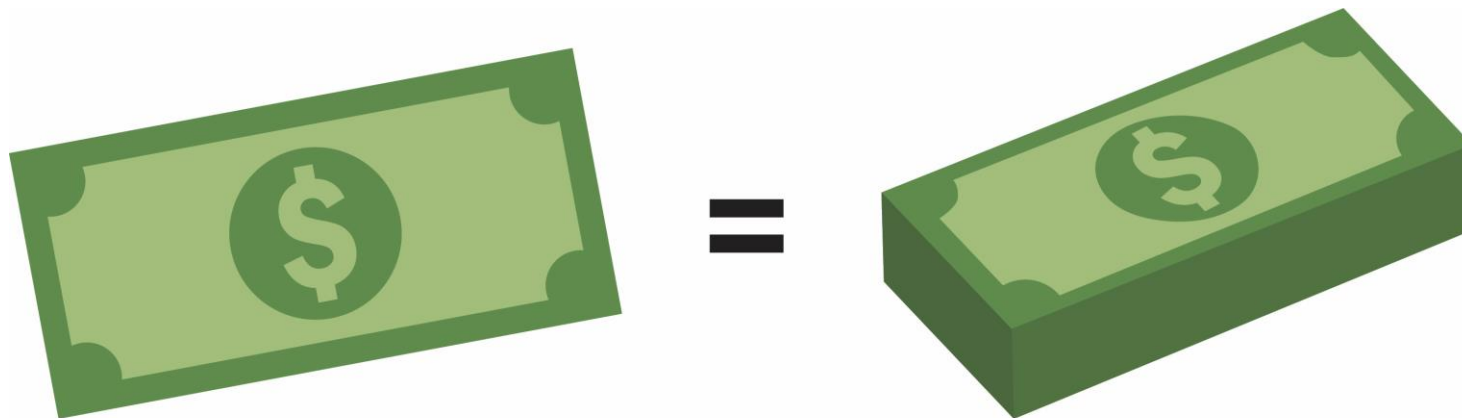
- **Highways-** efficiency and safety upgrades (101, 46, 41, 58, 227, 1)
- **Road and Pothole repairs** regionwide
- **Local Road Safety Improvements** - bridges, guardrails, road widening, intersections
- **Senior Transportation and Public Transit** improvements for Persons with Disabilities, Veterans
- **Pedestrian Safety and Safe Routes to School**
- **Regional Bike Trails** (Bob Jones, Anza, Coastal)

SLOCOG: 1/2c Sales Tax vs Inflation-only

SLOCOG: 1/2c Sales Tax vs Inflation-only



Let's Leverage Some Funds...BOGO!



**For every \$1
invested**

**\$3-5 in grant
funds return**

25 Counties (89% of Californians) **HAVE** a Dedicated Transportation Tax and are getting more MONEY back from State and Federal funding pots by leveraging a HIGHER AMOUNT OF LOCAL FUNDS

What is the Cost?

WHAT WOULD A 1/2 CENT REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SALES TAX LOOK LIKE?

THINGS THAT WILL **NOT** BE TAXED



HOUSING

rent, mortgage,
utilities,
insurance



MEDICAL

healthcare,
insurance



GROCERIES

food purchased
at grocery stores

THINGS THAT WILL BE TAXED



\$30 SHIRT = **\$0.15 TAX**

\$1,000 CELL PHONE =
\$5.00 TAX



\$30,000 CAR =
\$150.00 TAX

1 ADULT
(NO CHILDREN)
\$60,000 SALARY

WILL SPEND
AN ESTIMATED
\$2.31 A WEEK
ON A REGIONAL
SALES TAX

What are the Benefits...Jobs and the Economy



**\$100
Million**

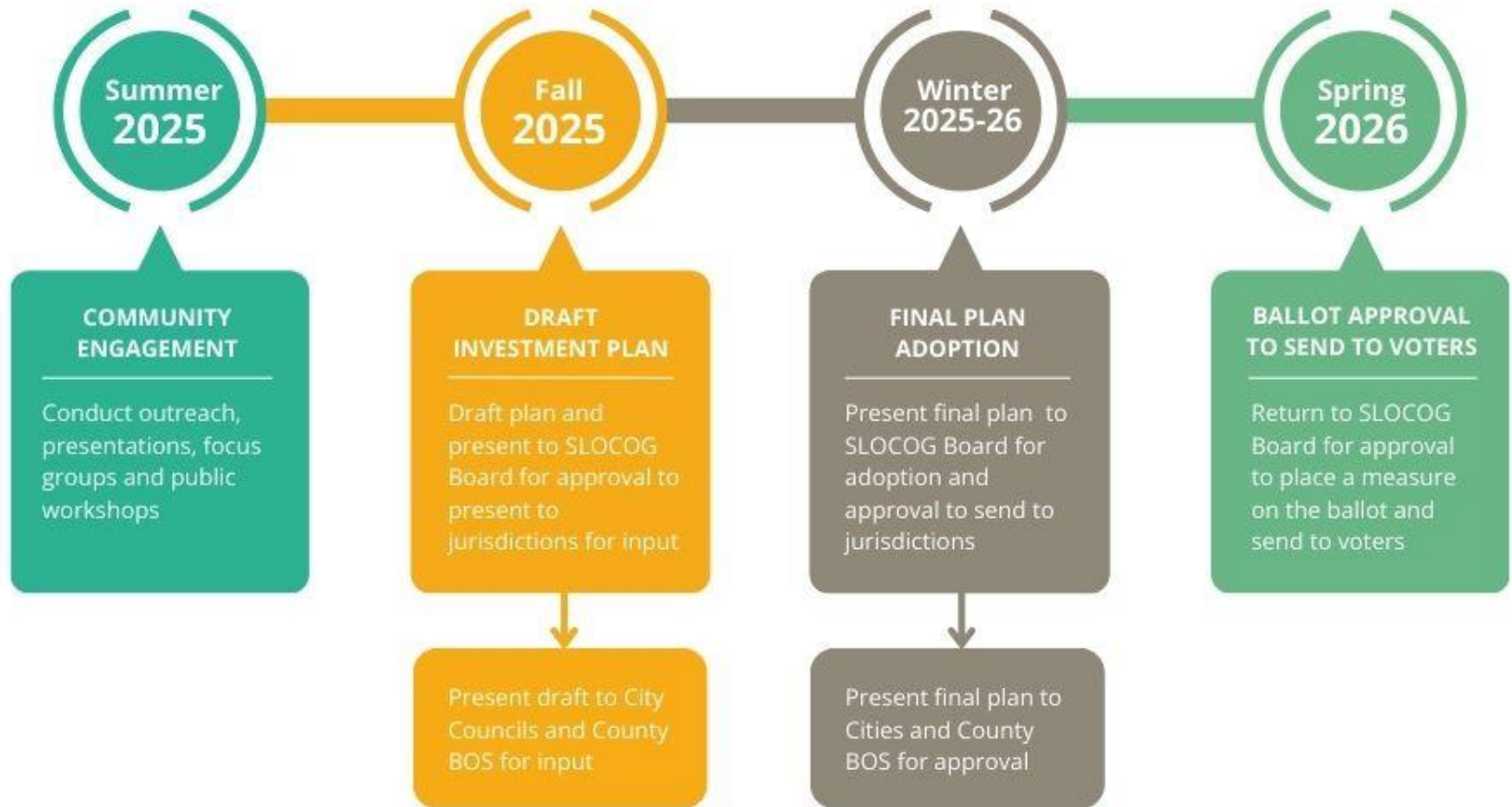
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**1,000-1,500
Jobs Created**

Local Roads First

Project Timeline



½ cent sales tax in San Luis Obispo Region would:

- **Raise \$35+m** each year
- Be used to **Leverage ~\$1 billion** out of Sacramento
- Be protected from Sacramento (**cannot be stolen**)
- **Speed up** project delivery (reducing cost)
- **Guarantee** every penny for our local **TRANSPORTATION** priorities (no bait and switch)
- **Contain Safeguards** (accountability, oversight, audits, reporting, a sunset date, and 1.5% maximum for SLOCOG administration)
- Provide that **tourists** pay a tax guaranteed for our roads (finally!)
- **And deliver a list of improvements!!!**