



Dear Chair Vargas,

Sierra Club and our coalition of community groups strongly urge the Board of Supervisors to adopt the **Fire Safe and VMT efficient alternative** in the County CAP. **This alternative will** reduce the risk of wildfire development in San Diego County by avoiding the high and very fire zones. Sprawl development increases the risk for wildfire, increases traffic, increases air pollution and high vehicle miles, and destroys important habitats.

Importantly, the **Fire Safe and VMT efficient alternative** will **not** reduce new housing, it will simply relocate it to fire-safe zones where fire risk is lower and where homeowners can still get fire insurance.

Sierra Club San Diego has long been opposing sprawl development and instead supports Smart Growth alternatives, building closer to existing communities without decreasing the construction of new housing. We have all witnessed the devastation from fires caused by expanding homes into the Wildland/Urban Interface. Sprawl development creates more emissions and greenhouse gas impacts that undermine a Climate Action Plan.

We want to continue our work with County Staff to adopt the best plan for future development. The firesafe plan would have considerable benefits for San Diego County.

- It would reduce the chance of fire ignition, which primarily start at the suburban/wildlands boundary.
- By reducing future sprawl development, it would reduce the vehicle miles travelled, thereby reducing greenhouse gas and air pollution.
- It would concentrate homes in more developed areas reducing the risk of homes burning in a wildfire.
- It would not reduce the number of homes that can be built in the county.

- It would preserve sensitive habitats for animals and plants and would act as a carbon sink. Coastal Sage Scrub and Chaparral are excellent at storing carbon.
- It would reduce traffic since development would be closer to transit and shorter car trips.

Under this scenario, the predicted growth of households in the unincorporated county above 2016 would be 8445 additional units by 2035 and 9902 additional units by 2050. But these new homes would be closer to transit and result in shorter car trips to reduce traffic and greenhouse gas.

“**The Firesafe and VMT efficient alternative**” would permit the same number of homes as the other alternatives, however, it would be true Smart Growth so that future home owners are still eligible to purchase fire insurance, which is unavailable and costly in the high and very high fire zones. Sprawl developments are not affordable.

“**The Firesafe and VMT efficient alternative**” is consistent with the General Plan and can be easily adopted with a proposed Smart Growth Overlay that would focus new construction in currently urban and suburban areas identified as VMT efficient outside of High and Very High Fire Hazard Zones.

For these reasons, we are asking for the Board of Supervisors to please join the **Sierra Club, SD350, Climate Action Campaign, the Environmental Health Coalition, Surfrider Foundation, SD Coastkeeper, Environmental Center of SD, Endangered Habitat League, San Diego Bird Alliance (Audobon Society), CleanEarth4Kids, Climate Reality Project, and the North County Climate Change Alliance** who all support the **Fire Safe and VMT efficient alternative** because it will keep our communities safe.

Sincerely,
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 Chair
 Sierra Club San Diego

Joe Houde
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