Memorandum

To: CHAIR AND COMMISSIONERS

CTC Meeting: August 15-16, 2024

From: TANISHA TAYLOR, Executive Director

Reference Number: 4.13, Information

Prepared By: Destiny Preston Assistant Deputy Director

Published Date: August 2, 2024

Subject: Innovations in Transportation: San Diego Association of Governments' Advanced Air Mobility Initiatives

Summary:

Kate McCauley, Senior Partnerships Strategist with the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), will provide an overview of the agency's work to further Advanced Air Mobility, in partnership with the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). Ms. McCauley will highlight the emerging Advanced Air Mobility market, and how the San Diego region is preparing for implementation.

Background:

Advanced Air Mobility is a rapidly developing sector of the aerospace industry comprised of novel aircraft and a collection of supportive digital infrastructure, with the objective of safely and efficiently integrating highly automated aircraft into the National Airspace System. Advanced Air Mobility is an umbrella term that encapsulates concepts like drone delivery and the use of vertical-takeoff-and-landing aircraft for the movement of goods, services, and/or people.

The guiding principle of SANDAG's Advanced Air Mobility program is to further a "comprehensive, equitable, sustainable, and resilient multimodal transportation network, with robust air transport, that extends beyond the San Diego jurisdictional line and enables the safe, expeditious movement of goods, services, and people". SANDAG and regional partners are exploring how to seamlessly integrate these novel aircraft and the market's supporting infrastructure into our regional transportation system.

Leveraging Advanced Air Mobility as a new modality can provide a middle mile transportation solution for an urban environment with routes around 30 miles, as well as for regional transport with routes up to approximately 190 miles. Today, commercial small uncrewed aircraft systems, otherwise known as drones, are already providing last-mile or store-to-door delivery options in Texas, Virginia, and North Carolina.

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Via the SANDAG Advanced Air Mobility Collaborative (Collaborative), SANDAG works cooperatively with industry leaders, participants, and regional stakeholders to address aircraft, airspace, infrastructure, and policy considerations that will support the regional goal of seamless integration. The Collaborative hosts quarterly working sessions that address: (1) operational efficiency, safety, and security; (2) infrastructure demand capacity and technology scalability; (3) environmental sustainability and economic viability; and (4) equity, engagement, and public benefit. These workstreams tackle various subtopics that help to establish a comprehensive perspective on how to best undertake localized Advanced Air Mobility integration efforts, and aid in sharing those findings with other communities initiating similar planning endeavors.

SANDAG has completed an Industry and Market Assessment, a living repository that allows the team to remain abreast of industry trends and continually provides market analysis as new materials, standards, regulations, and policies are published. This year, SANDAG will work to finalize a regional policy framework, implementation strategy, and stakeholder and public engagement strategy that will support early stages of Advanced Air Mobility integration into the San Diego community.