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### *Project Management Team (PMT)*

Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)  
County of San Bernardino  
City of Twentynine Palms  
Town of Yucca Valley

### *Consultant Team:*

KOA Corporation  
Leslie Scott Consulting (LSC)  
Elwood & Associates  
Arts Connection of San Bernardino



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CHAPTER 1:

# introduction

**IN THIS CHAPTER:**

1. About Morongo Basin
2. Morongo Basin Communities
3. Placemaking & Public Art in the Morongo Basin
4. Goals & Objectives

**Chapter 1** of the Morongo Basin Active Transportation Plan ("the Plan") provides an introduction to the overall purpose and vision of this planning document and what it means for the region.

After taking a brief look at the geographic and demographic characteristics of the communities making up the Morongo Basin, in addition to the local arts community's role in creative placemaking, the chapter discusses the goals and objectives that serve as the premise for this Plan and the County and local agencies' future active transportation planning and implementation efforts.

## 1.1. ABOUT THE MORONGO BASIN

The Morongo Basin is located in San Bernardino County, California. The combined area studied for this Plan includes over 43 square miles; the project area covers two incorporated cities: the Town Yucca Valley and City of Twentynine Palms, and eight unincorporated communities: Morongo Valley, Yucca Valley Area, Pioneertown, Rimrock, Landers, Joshua Tree, Twentynine Palms Area, and Wonder Valley.

Communities across the Morongo Basin are characterized by their desert environment, low-density land use, and small town character. Residential land uses dominate with commercial and scattered industrial uses. California State Route 62 (SR-62) forms the principle roadway of the Basin, connecting the Morongo Valley, Yucca Valley, Joshua Tree, Twentynine Palms, and Wonder Valley. State Route 247 (SR-247) is the other major roadway, leading from Yucca Valley to Landers and other parts of the Homestead Valley. However, many roads are unpaved or lack additional roadway facilities such as paved shoulders, striping, sidewalks, and curb ramps.

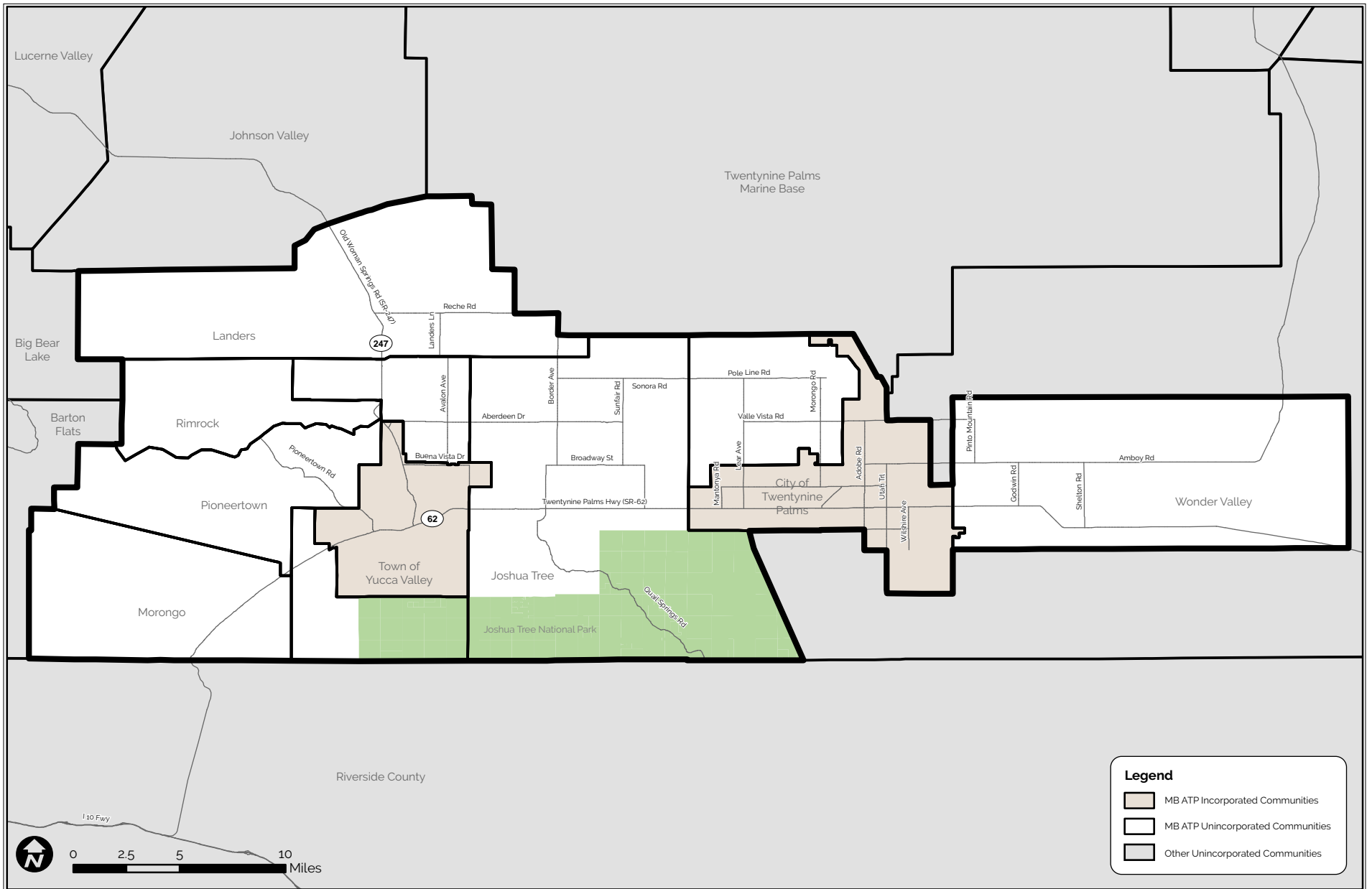
The region's earliest inhabitants included the Serrano and Chemehuevi tribes. Ranchers, miners, and suppliers settled in the region starting in the late 1800s. After World War II, the desert became a popular location for veterans. Freeway development in the 1950s and 1960s opened up opportunities to develop the land for those looking to live in an area filled with natural beauty and rural charm. Today, the region continues to boast a diverse economy including tourism, arts, military, ecotourism, and education industries.

The Morongo Basin is perhaps most well known for its access to Joshua Tree National Park. "While the Joshua Tree area has been inhabited by humans for at least 5,000 years, by the late 1920s, the development of new roads into the desert had brought an influx of land developers and cactus poachers." Designated as a national park in 1994, Joshua Tree National Park spans over 790,000 acres, over 590,00 of which is designated as wilderness (NPS.gov). Today, the park has become a popular site for camping, hiking, equestrian activities, and nature enthusiasts, bringing tourism and economic benefits into the region's local communities.





Figure 1.1.1. Overview & Project Area Map





# 1.2. MORONGO BASIN COMMUNITIES

Data source: American Community Survey 2016 5-year estimates

## TWENTYNINE PALMS (City)



**Twentynine Palms** is home to a 3.9 square mile portion of the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, a military training ground which forms a major focal point and focus of activity within the community. Approximately 15% of the City has been developed. About 80% of land uses are residential, including single-family, multi-family, and rural living uses. Commercial development is located along the corridors of SR-62 and Adobe Road and in the Downtown area. The City also includes several parks and other public spaces maintained for residents.

**25,848**

Total Population

**\$40,888**

Median Household Income

**29.3%**

Vulnerable Population  
(population < 15 and 65+)

**20.1%**

School-Aged Population  
(students enrolled in 12th grade or under)

### MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION TO WORK

Note: 2.4% (other)

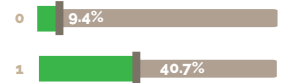
- 13.2%** walk
- 0.8%** bike
- 64.1%** drive
- 12.1%** carpool
- 0.8%** transit
- 6.8%** works from home

### TRAVEL TIME TO WORK



### LOW VEHICLE OWNERSHIP

% of households with 0 or 1 vehicles



## YUCCA VALLEY (Town)



First named and designated as a community in 1949 after the installation of water lines, the **Town of Yucca Valley** was formally incorporated in 1991. SR-62 is home to the Town's commercial core which, under the guidance of the Old Town Specific Plan, is becoming a vibrant destination and main street for the region. Outside of SR-62 the Town is primarily composed of low density and rural residential uses nestled between mountains and hills to the north and south.

**21,362**

Total Population

**\$41,569**

Median Household Income

**39.4%**

Vulnerable Population  
(population < 15 and 65+)

**20.1%**

School-Aged Population  
(students enrolled in 12th grade or under)

### MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION TO WORK

Note: 1.7% (other)

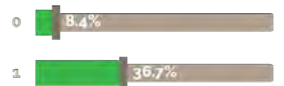
- 2.6%** walk
- 0.6%** bike
- 79.7%** drive
- 6.9%** carpool
- 0.2%** transit
- 8.3%** works from home

### TRAVEL TIME TO WORK

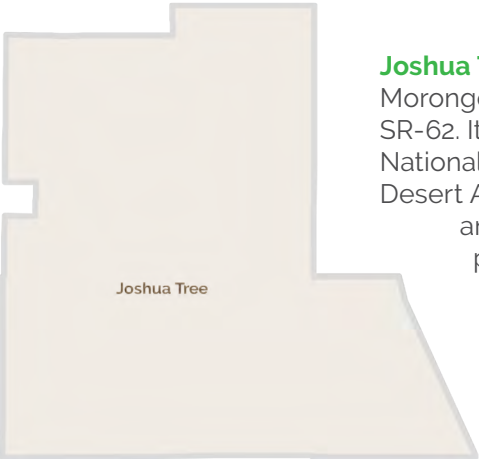


### LOW VEHICLE OWNERSHIP

% of households with 0 or 1 vehicles



### JOSHUA TREE (Unincorporated)



**Joshua Tree** is located near the center of the Morongo Basin region and is centered around SR-62. It is a gateway community to Joshua Tree National Park. Other attractors include the Hi-Desert Airport, Joshua Tree Community Center, and Copper Mountain College. The most prominent land uses are Rural Living, Resource Conservation, and Single Residential with several commercial and institutional land use areas.

**9,696**

Total Population

**\$40,355**

Median Household Income

**36.0%**

Vulnerable Population  
(population < 15 and 65+)

**15.7%**

School-Aged Population  
(students enrolled in 12th grade or under)

**MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION TO WORK**  
Note: 3.5% (other)

**2.8%** walk

**0.3%** bike

**81.3%** drive

**3.8%** carpool

**1.8%** transit

**6.4%** works from home

**TRAVEL TIME TO WORK**



**LOW VEHICLE OWNERSHIP**

% of households with 0 or 1 vehicles



### LANDERS (Unincorporated)

**Landers** is part of the Homestead Valley, located north of Yucca Valley. Rural residential uses with large lots characterize the community.



**3,148**

Total Population

**\$32,442**

Median Household Income

**34.2%**

Vulnerable Population  
(population < 15 and 65+)

**13.6%**

School-Aged Population  
(students enrolled in 12th grade or under)

**MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION TO WORK**  
Note: 3.1% (other)

**0.0%** walk

**0.0%** bike

**68.6%** drive

**17.1%** carpool

**0.0%** transit

**11.1%** works from home

**TRAVEL TIME TO WORK**



**LOW VEHICLE OWNERSHIP**

% of households with 0 or 1 vehicles



### RIMROCK (Unincorporated)

Rimrock is a small community located northwest of Pioneertown. It is primarily composed of rural residential uses.



**702**

Total Population

**\$33,212**

Median Household Income

**40.1%**

Vulnerable Population  
(population < 15 and 65+)

**5.4%**

School-Aged Population  
(students enrolled in 12th grade or under)

**MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION TO WORK** Note: 7.3% (other)

**0.0%**  
walk

**0.0%**  
bike

**77.9%**  
drive

**6.0%**  
carpool

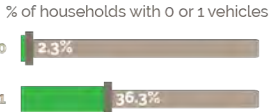
**0.0%**  
transit

**8.8%**  
works from home

**TRAVEL TIME TO WORK**



**LOW VEHICLE OWNERSHIP**



### PIONEERTOWN (Unincorporated)



Pioneertown is located northwest of Yucca Valley. Its Old West-inspired neighborhood center has been the set of many Hollywood movies. Single-family and rural residential uses surround the central portion that contains hotels and restaurants.

**380**

Total Population

**\$40,920**

Median Household Income

**42.6%**

Vulnerable Population  
(population < 15 and 65+)

**5.8%**

School-Aged Population  
(students enrolled in 12th grade or under)

**MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION TO WORK** Note: 5.9% (other)

**0.1%**  
walk

**0.0%**  
bike

**71.7%**  
drive

**5.4%**  
carpool

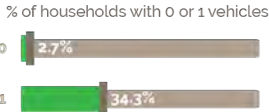
**0.0%**  
transit

**16.9%**  
works from home

**TRAVEL TIME TO WORK**



**LOW VEHICLE OWNERSHIP**



## MORONGO (Unincorporated)



**Morongo** is a part of Morongo Valley, which covers about 44 square miles and is bounded by the Sawtooth Mountains on the north and the San Bernardino Mountains on the west. It is primarily residential and has attracted a diverse profile of residents including those of retirement age. Some commercial uses are located along SR-62.

**3,044**

Total Population

**\$36,283**

Median Household Income

**32.6%**

Vulnerable Population  
(population < 15 and 65+)

**15.6%**

School-Aged Population  
(students enrolled in 12th grade or under)

### MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION TO WORK

Note: 1.9% (other)

**4.1%**  
walk

**0.0%**  
bike

**88.1%**  
drive

**2.2%**  
carpool

**0.0%**  
transit

**3.7%**  
works from home

### TRAVEL TIME TO WORK



### LOW VEHICLE OWNERSHIP

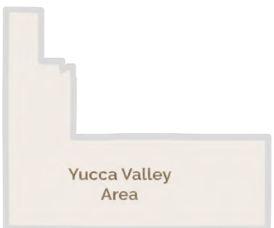
% of households with 0 or 1 vehicles



## YUCCA VALLEY AREA (Unincorporated)



**Yucca Valley Area** is an unincorporated community located adjacent to the incorporated Town of Yucca Valley. It is comprised primarily of rural residential uses.



**2,955**

Total Population

**\$34,662**

Median Household Income

**38.1%**

Vulnerable Population  
(population < 15 and 65+)

**18.7%**

School-Aged Population  
(students enrolled in 12th grade or under)

### MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION TO WORK

Note: 1.9% (other)

**0.8%**  
walk

**0.0%**  
bike

**88.1%**  
drive

**2.2%**  
carpool

**0.0%**  
transit

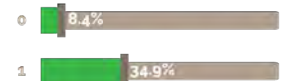
**3.7%**  
works from home

### TRAVEL TIME TO WORK



### LOW VEHICLE OWNERSHIP

% of households with 0 or 1 vehicles



### TWENTYNINE PALMS AREA (Unincorporated)



**Twentynine Palms Area** is an unincorporated community located adjacent to the incorporated town of Yucca Valley. It is comprised of rural residential and single family land uses.

**4,643**

Total Population

**\$27,317**

Median Household Income

**28.5%**

Vulnerable Population  
(population < 15 and 65+)

**14.3%**

School-Aged Population  
(students enrolled in 12th grade or under)

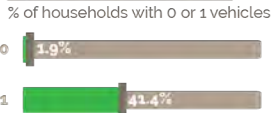
**MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION TO WORK** Note: 1.9% (other)

- 24.4%** walk
- 0.9%** bike
- 47.7%** drive
- 15.0%** carpool
- 0.0%** transit
- 10.2%** works from home

**TRAVEL TIME TO WORK**

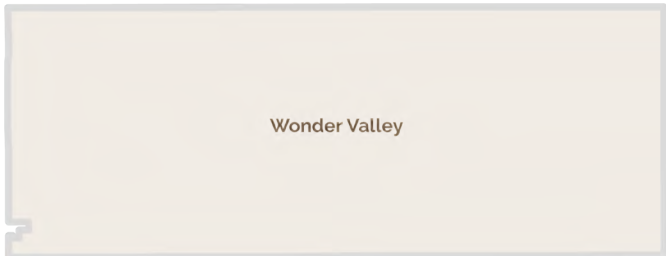


**LOW VEHICLE OWNERSHIP**



### WONDER VALLEY (Unincorporated)

**Wonder Valley** is located east of TwentyninePalms. It is sparsely settled and populated with rural residential living spaces.



**1,352**

Total Population

**\$19,710**

Median Household Income

**34.0%**

Vulnerable Population  
(population < 15 and 65+)

**7.7%**

School-Aged Population  
(students enrolled in 12th grade or under)

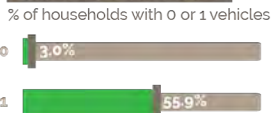
**MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION TO WORK** Note: 1.1% (other)

- 0.0%** walk
- 0.0%** bike
- 79.1%** drive
- 2.2%** carpool
- 0.0%** transit
- 17.6%** works from home

**TRAVEL TIME TO WORK**



**LOW VEHICLE OWNERSHIP**



## 1.3. PLACEMAKING & PUBLIC ART IN THE MORONGO BASIN

Placemaking, a term often used by planners and artists, has been one of the most inventive and creative elements to be included within transportation projects across the country.

**The inclusion of local artists and public art initiatives help create unique destinations and tell a story about place and community. In its simplicity, placemaking is a reflection of community identity and the shared values of those that make up the community.**

This collaboration between planners and artists in the placemaking practice has occurred for many decades in the U.S.

As a unique aspect of this Plan, the Project Team included the County's designated non-profit arts council, Arts Connection, and public art consultant Elwood & Associates (EA). By doing so, the project tapped into their knowledge and experience with the thriving local arts community, cultural destinations within the region, and best practices currently

in use by transportation agencies throughout the United States regarding the inclusion of public art-related elements.

The inclusion of artists in re-imagining the visual landscape for transportation users enhances the experience we have of places that are often crowded and filled with delays. In the past, many large national transportation programs included art as a decorative element; today, they are embracing a more holistic approach. Artists are being recognized for bringing a different perspective into focus, and their creative efforts work to enhance important visual cues related to safety and wayfinding. Additionally, public engagement and outreach activities designed by arts organizations and artists for their local communities can help break down historical barriers in the planning process and bring new voices into the conversation.

The Project Team built upon their existing organizational and artistic networks in order to increase opportunities for local residents to share their perspectives

on how the Morongo Basin Active Transportation Plan can serve the community. Placing an emphasis on the inclusion of the local creative community in plan recommendations acknowledges their role in the region. The creative community represents important values shared by many residents who identify as stewards of the land, support land reclamation, are concerned about the type and impact of development, and seek to balance issues related to tourism and quality of life.

As the designated County arts council, Arts Connection has the resources and expertise to oversee the solicitation of and collaboration with individual artists to make impactful art projects that support the goals of the Morongo Basin Active Transportation Plan. The following pages provide a snapshot of the public art-related outreach that was conducted as part of the Plan.





## 1.4. GOALS & OBJECTIVES

This Plan envisions a future where residents and visitors will find walking and biking opportunities that meet their needs and enhance their lifestyles. The following goals and objectives serve to guide the planning and implementation of active transportation improvements in the Morongo Basin.

### 1. IMPROVE SAFETY

Walking and biking can be dangerous, especially in rural areas where many roads are unpaved and lack paved shoulders or sidewalks. The Plan will strive to implement cost-efficient infrastructure that addresses the most urgent safety hazards, responds appropriately to the current environment, and makes residents and visitors more comfortable walking and biking in the region.

### 2. SUPPLY HEALTHY OPTIONS

Walking and biking are great ways of getting exercise while moving about a daily routine. This Plan provides opportunities to help more people to realize the benefits of walking and biking while reinforcing these behaviors with appropriate programming.

### 3. CONNECT PEOPLE TO PLACES

Travel connects people together. The Plan recognizes a human connection is at stake in every trip, helping people get to the places they most want to travel, while also seeking creative opportunities to engage the community and develop a supportive culture for education, arts, and active transportation infrastructure.

### 4. ENHANCE THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

The Morongo Basin is known for its beautiful open terrain and clear skies. The Plan helps to maintain the natural environment for future generations while enhancing the ability of people to interact with their surroundings.

### 5. PROMOTE A VIBRANT ECONOMY

The Plan looks for projects that will make the Morongo Basin an attractive place to live and work. It looks to implement contextually-appropriate solutions that will revitalize and enhance the surrounding community.



## SAFETY

**GOAL:** Improve the overall safety of pedestrians and bicyclists within the Morongo Basin region.

**Objective 1.1.** Reduce bicyclist and pedestrian fatalities and injuries resulting from collisions

**Objective 1.2.** Develop efficient procedures for maintaining pedestrian and bicycle facilities

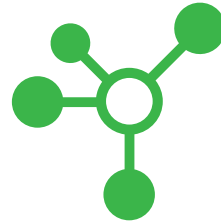


## PUBLIC HEALTH

**GOAL:** Provide opportunities to help people to realize the benefits of walking and biking.

**Objective 1.1.** Encourage programs at schools and community centers to teach residents safe and healthy biking and walking habits

**Objective 1.2.** Invest in active transportation facilities that will provide opportunities for exercise and recreation



## CONNECTIVITY

**GOAL:** Help people get to the places they most want to travel and develop a supportive culture for walking and biking.

**Objective 1.1.** Invest in active transportation infrastructure that links population centers to regional trails, parks, schools, and transit stations

**Objective 1.2.** Support public art-related projects, open streets events, and programming that encourage walking and biking within the Morongo Basin community



## ENVIRONMENT

**GOAL:** Maintain the natural environment for future generations and enhance the ability of people to interact with their surroundings.

**Objective 1.1.** Reduce vehicle emissions and pollution by increasing the number of walking and biking trips

**Objective 1.2.** Maintain and enhance access to local destinations and Joshua Tree National Park

**Objective 1.3.** Utilize Mojave Desert Land Trust's Reading the Landscape when implementing creative placemaking projects and programs



## ECONOMY

**GOAL:** Implement contextually-appropriate solutions that will revitalize and enhance the surrounding community.

**Objective 1.1.** Improve accessibility to jobs by walking and biking

**Objective 1.2.** Invest in active transportation facilities that will attract new businesses, promote tourism, and bring economic growth to the region

## THE 6 E's of SRTS

The Plan also addresses walking and biking safety for schools within the region.

Specifically, the Plan evaluated conditions for the nine remaining Morongo Unified School District (MUSD) schools that were not a part of other San Bernardino Safe Routes to School efforts (SBCTA SRTS Plan, Phases I & II).

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is supported by six key components, often referred to the six E's of SRTS. Together, these components provide a framework for all SRTS efforts and provide a guidance for participants on the type of improvements that can be a part of the project.

**Chapter 4** expands on the different improvement tools and programs that fall under each component.

**Chapter 5** and **Appendix B** details engineering recommendations for local focus area projects, including areas surrounding each school.



### Education

Educational programs in the school community can have a lasting impact, particularly in addressing travel behavior and use of infrastructural improvements. More specifically, education itself can equip students and parents with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to bike and walk to school and other community destinations.



### Encouragement

Encouragement strategies within the SRTS context are often used to foster positive thinking and perceptions towards active transportation trends. These can take place in the form of events, clubs, and activities that inspire walking, bicycling, or carpooling through fun activities or incentives.



### Engineering

SRTS engineering tools are the physical and infrastructural improvements that are used to help create safer and more convenient environments for walking and biking. In particular, these improvement tools can be categorized as pedestrian, bicycle, and/or traffic calming improvements.



### Enforcement

Enforcement efforts can help ensure that the community is creating safe and responsible behaviors on the road and building respect amongst all road users. Focused enforcement on traffic laws surrounding school sites should include controlling vehicle speed, yielding to pedestrians in crosswalks, and proper walking and biking behaviors.



### Evaluation

Evaluation under the SRTS framework utilizes existing school area conditions as a baseline to monitor the progress of any implemented programming and engineering improvements. Continued program evaluation in the future allows for tracking of successes or the ability to modify the Plan in order to achieve desired results.



### Equity

Efforts to support SRTS improvements within low-income communities, communities of color, and beyond should be incorporated throughout the other E's. In doing so, SRTS improvements can help address equity concerns and ensure safe and equitable outcomes for all users.



