

Spotlight – Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (from the September 2012 CSDC Network News)

The Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG) is a regional planning agency comprised of Santa Barbara County and all eight incorporated cities within the county. On the south coast are the cities of Carpinteria, Santa Barbara, and Goleta and in the northern, agricultural region are the cities of Buellton, Solvang, Lompoc, Guadalupe, and Santa Maria. Within the county are UC Santa Barbara, Vandenberg Air Force Base, a federal correctional facility, and the Chumash Indian Reservation.



SBCAG distributes local, state, and federal transportation funds and also acts as a forum for addressing multi-jurisdictional issues such as regional housing needs and greenhouse gas emissions as required by new state legislation (SB 375). SBCAG is designated by state and federal governments as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the Local Transportation Authority (LTA), and the Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA). Under these designations, SBCAG has responsibility for regional transportation planning and programming activities in the county.

SBCAG has been part of the statewide Census Affiliate Data Center network since its inception. As part of the Affiliate Center efforts, a variety of SBCAG publications use census data to provide information of interest to the SBCAG Board for decision-making. The SBCAG Board recently received a summary update of 2010 Census results and was very appreciative of the updated demographic information. In the past, the SBCAG Board has received specialized analyses and reports on the “Hispanic Population” and a “Profile of Older Adults.” Data are also provided to local jurisdictions and agencies in their long-range planning activities, such as the update of their General Plans and Housing Elements. Special districts, housing authorities, local interest groups and businesses all have benefited from the data provided by the affiliate center.

A number of the federal and state-legislated planning responsibilities involve the use of Census data, including the following:

Regional Growth Forecast

This thirty-year forecast provides a consistent set of population, housing, employment, and land use forecasts for Santa Barbara County jurisdictions. The forecast is also used in a variety of applications such as local General Plans, public service district forecasts, business development, transportation forecasts, and air quality planning. The modeling required for the forecast relies on age and race data to develop a cohort survival model that ages the future population as well as household headship rates to determine future household formation.

Regional Housing Needs Assessment

The California Department of Housing & Community Development estimates the number of additional housing units needed to accommodate both existing and projected housing needs for all income levels. SBCAG is charged with developing the distribution of that projection for each individual jurisdiction to include in their Housing Element. The need for housing is distributed based on a variety of Census and other data including existing households, vacancy rates, and income distributions.

Travel Demand Modeling

SBCAG conducts travel demand modeling to satisfy a series of federal and state requirements and to assess the implications of future growth on the transportation system. Travel demand modeling estimates the amount of travel on the transportation system and provides a computer simulation of travel on the roadway network based on a variety of Census and socioeconomic data and travel patterns. The journey-to-work data are extensively used for this application. In addition, new state legislation (SB 375) requires SBCAG to develop land use modeling capability that is based on GIS and Census data sets.

Other activities that incorporate Census data include:

- Commuter Services
- The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) a 20-year plan of regional transportation needs, goals, and projects.
- Transit Planning, which includes an annual assessment of regional transit needs.
- Passenger Rail Planning
- Bicycle/Pedestrian Planning

In the past, SBCAG maintained a library of published Census materials and worked with UCSB to process Census summary tapes. However, with the advent of the American Factfinder and other on line resources, there is less of a need for published data reports. As a result the affiliate center maintains its own data files and fulfills data requests electronically. Data are maintained primarily in Excel format; more recently, GIS shapefiles are becoming more relevant for data users. In the future, the affiliate center will continue to upgrade its Census website to provide analyses of American Community Survey (ACS) data with specific topical reports and mapping products.

The oddest data request received by SBCAG was from a White House analyst who wanted information prior to the President's planned visit to the community of Los Alamos. However, the White House analyst was off course by a thousand miles and SBCAG staff referred him to the community of Los Alamos, New Mexico, not Los Alamos in Santa Barbara County, California.

One part-time staff member provides the expertise for the Affiliate Center activities in the SBCAG organization. Brian Bresolin, the staff Regional Analyst, has fulfilled this role among others since 1990. Brian, a California native from San Francisco and a graduate of UC Irvine, earned a master's degree in City and Regional Planning from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo.



Brian Bresolin