



City of Arts & Innovation

News Release

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City of Riverside Receives Prestigious Regional Sustainability Award for Streamlining Development While Funding Projects for Cyclists

New system for calculating vehicle miles traveled provides funding for improvements for walkers and cyclists, certainty for developers worried about time, costs

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – The City of Riverside’s leadership in sustainability has drawn the top award from the largest and most influential regional government organization in Southern California for simplifying a statewide requirement for analyzing traffic impacts of new development while also generating funds for improving the City’s bike lanes.

Riverside’s Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Mitigation Bank Pilot Program received the “Outstanding Achievement in Sustainability” award from the Southern California Association of Governments at its recent 2026 Regional Conference and General Assembly.

The program has been credited with assisting Riverside in facilitating the production of housing and speeding development while complying with state environmental regulations.

“This program makes promoting sustainability while facilitating investment in our community easy,” said Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson, who recently accepted the award along with City staff. “The VMT pilot is a win-win for developers and our environment.”

Cities and property developers across California have struggled since 2020 with how best to implement a state law that created a new statewide standard for transportation analysis under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The program can be confusing and has the potential for slowing development of housing and other projects.

To overcome those issues, the City adopted new traffic impact guidelines in 2020 and worked on long-term solutions designed to simplify and add certainty to the process, reduce planning timelines, and address costs.

Riverside's VMT Mitigation Bank Pilot Program is the first in Riverside County to provide developers with a streamlined, low-cost option to meet the VMT requirement contained in CEQA with the lowest statewide rate of \$98 per VMT reduced.

The program enables developers to know how much they would be required to pay – if anything -- in connection with a proposed development and receive the required entitlements faster so that construction can get underway sooner. In exchange, the City gets funding for citywide infrastructure projects that improve safety, reduce emissions, and expand transportation options.

The TREDlite VMT free transportation planning tool evaluates projects and assesses VMT costs, while evaluating the effectiveness of potential solutions to impacts created by the proposed development.

The City's updated traffic impact analysis guidelines use recalculated screening criteria for VMT to let developers know in advance if their projects would be required analyze VMT. Such analysis was once required if the project built more than 11 single-family dwelling units. In Riverside, projects that build as many as 79 units can now proceed without VMT analysis, saving time and money.

“When confronted with a potential onerous requirement from government, developers appreciate certainty and timeliness,” Interim Public Works Director Nathan Mustafa said. “The beauty of our VMT program is that it cuts through confusion, reduces potential delays and creates a funding stream for projects that benefit our walking and cycling residents.”

More information about the program and the awards can be found here:

<https://riversidevmt.com/>

[SCAG Sustainability Awards | Southern California Association of Governments](#)

[Outstanding Achievement in Sustainability: City of Riverside's VMT Mitigation Bank Pilot Program](#)