



Community Air Protection incentives, and by extension, the material included in this Project Plan, is part of [California Climate Investments](#), a statewide initiative that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment. Community Air Protection incentives, and by extension, the material included in this Project Plan, is part of [California Climate Investments](#), a statewide initiative that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment – particularly in disadvantaged communities.

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## 1. Project Identification

### 1.1 Background

In 2023 and 2024, the communities of San Ysidro and East Otay Mesa worked with the San Diego County Air Pollution Control District (SDAPCD) to create a Community Emissions Reduction Program (CERP). This effort was part of California’s AB 617 Community Air Protection Program (CAPP). Community members, local organizations, and the International Border Community Steering Committee helped shape strategies to reduce air pollution in the area. These strategies were included in the final CERP, which the California Air Resources Board (CARB) approved in 2024.

### Air Quality and Traffic Burden

San Ysidro, the City of San Diego’s southernmost neighborhood, has about 30,000 residents and borders the San Ysidro Port of Entry—the busiest land border crossing in the Western Hemisphere. More than 70,000 vehicles line up at the border each day, and during peak times, traffic backups can stretch more than five miles on nearby freeways.

San Ysidro is one of the most pollution-impacted communities in California. Key indicators include:

- PM2.5 pollution levels in the 95th percentile statewide
- Traffic pollution in the 100th percentile statewide
- Air toxics cancer risk higher than 95–100% of communities across the country
- Asthma rates higher than 68–78% of California census tracts
- Cardiovascular disease rates higher than 68–80% of tracts statewide

San Ysidro census tracts are designated as Disadvantaged Communities under SB 535 and Low-Income Communities under AB 1550. According to CalEnviroScreen 4.0, the community ranks among the top 17% most burdened areas in the entire state.

### Organizational Capacity

Casa Familiar has been serving San Ysidro for over 50 years. With more than 30 active programs and six community facilities, Casa is the primary community-based organization in the neighborhood. They have the trust, experience, and systems needed to successfully carry out this project.

Casa Familiar has a strong history of managing both public and private grants, including an \$8.46 million California Strategic Growth Council grant for the Community Resilience Center, which includes new construction and three years of programming. Casa Familiar maintains strong financial systems, reporting processes, and partnerships.

They engage more than 10,000 residents each year across Casa Familiar's programs and have held regular community meetings for over two decades. Casa Familiar's Promotora network—local residents trained as community leaders—helps Casa Familiar reach community members who are often left out of planning processes. Casa also partners with local agencies and organizations, including SANDAG, the City of San Diego Planning Department, the San Ysidro School District, and local affordable housing communities.

Casa Familiar has been working with residents on air quality and transportation issues for more than 15 years. In 2009, Casa held public workshops on border-related air pollution. In 2016, with support from the Office of Environmental Health and Hazard Assessment, Casa launched a resident steering committee and installed low-cost air monitors throughout San Ysidro. This study revealed that earlier state assessments underestimated local pollution levels and showed a strong link between border wait times and pollution. These findings helped shape updates to CalEnviroScreen 4.0.

## **1.2 Project Description**

The San Ysidro Community Circulator is a zero-emission neighborhood shuttle that will connect residents to transit stops, schools, parks, medical and community services, and other key destinations within San Ysidro. The service helps fill first and last-mile transportation gaps and directly responds to long-standing resident priorities around mobility and air quality. Casa Familiar is seeking funding to purchase two electric shuttle vehicles to launch the service.

### **Project Status**

The Circulator is currently in the planning phase, with service expected to begin in October 2026. It is part of La Semilla, Casa Familiar's new Community Resilience Center at 213 West Park Avenue, opening in late summer 2026. The center is funded by the California Strategic Growth Council and will host environmental justice programs, including the Circulator.

Casa Familiar is working with the City of San Diego on route planning, stop locations, and operating hours, all shaped by community feedback. An RFP for an external shuttle operator will be released in June 2026.

### **Vehicles**

Casa Familiar has selected a two-vehicle fleet based on community needs and accessibility considerations:

- Volkswagen ID. Buzz (\$70,000), or if unavailable, a Kia Niro EV (\$45,000): A fully electric vehicle for everyday circulator routes.
- Ford eTransit with ADA accessibility modifications (\$125,000): A larger, electric vehicle designed for seniors, riders with disabilities, and wheelchair users.
- Vehicle wrapping and community branding (\$7,000 for both vehicles): The wraps will make the Circulator easy to recognize and help distinguish it from informal, unlicensed shuttles operating locally.

### **1.3 Benefits**

The San Ysidro Community Circulator will reduce emissions of particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, toxic air contaminants, and greenhouse gases by offering clean, zero-emission transportation options. It will also improve mobility for residents who rely on walking, biking, and transit.

## **2. Community Support**

### **2.1 Background – Community Steering Committee**

The International Border Communities CERP, adopted in March 2024, was created with guidance from the International Border Communities Steering Committee (IBCSC), a resident- and stakeholder-led group formed under AB 617 to represent San Ysidro and Otay Mesa. The CERP identifies community priorities for cleaner air and better transportation.

Electric shuttles—such as the San Ysidro Community Circulator—are specifically listed in the CERP under Passenger Vehicles Strategy 5, Action 8. The action calls for flexible fleet programs, including free electric shuttle services, to improve first and last-mile connections and fill transportation gaps.

Because the Circulator was named in the CERP, it reflects a formally recognized community priority. It is a practical, near-term project that advances residents' goals for more clean transportation options and less reliance on personal vehicles.

### **2.2 Outreach and Community Engagement**

Community members have shaped the Circulator concept from the beginning, and engagement has continued through every stage of planning.

#### **La Semilla Design Process: Transportation Survey (2022)**

In 2022, Casa hosted two bilingual workshops where residents helped shape the design of La Semilla. Transportation access emerged as a high priority, and a dedicated survey gathered detailed input. The final building design includes space and infrastructure for the electric shuttle program. Outreach included phone calls, emails, social media, and door-to-door engagement.

#### **Construyendo Juntos Series (2024–2025)**

From 2024 to 2025, Casa held the bi-monthly Construyendo Juntos (Building Together) series, drawing 60–70 attendees per session. Residents discussed parking, mobility needs, the Circulator, and shared e-bike options. Community members consistently supported a neighborhood shuttle and helped identify gaps the Circulator could fill.

#### **Promotora Focus Group (September 2025)**

In September 2025, Promotora volunteers helped refine the design of a community-wide survey. Participants independently referenced the former neighborhood jitney service, expressing excitement about the Circulator as its modern, formal replacement—showing strong community familiarity with and support for this type of service.

#### **Community Survey (April–May 2026)**

Casa is currently collecting broader input through a bilingual survey available at [casafamiliar.org/microbus](https://casafamiliar.org/microbus). Residents are providing feedback on preferred routes, schedules, fares, and amenities. The survey includes an interactive map where residents can suggest and vote on stop locations.

To ensure broad participation, the survey was also available in print and distributed at community programs and events. Outreach included social media, community centers, local events, and support from Promotoras who assist residents with both digital and paper versions. This approach ensures that seniors, residents with limited digital access, and residents with limited English proficiency are all included.

### **3. Participant Requirements**

#### **3.1 Participant Requirements**

As the participant, Casa Familiar must adhere to the following requirements:

- Must comply with all applicable local, State, and federal rules and regulations as well as best practices for vehicle(s) operator employment and/or subcontracting
- Must **NOT** purchase, make down payments, or take possession of the new vehicle(s) prior to an executed grant agreement with SDAPCD
- Must remain the owner of and agree to operate and maintain the new vehicle(s) for the duration of the project life, minimum three years
- Must comply with all general provisions and insurance requirements SDAPCD includes in the executed grant agreement
- Must submit annual reports with copies of current registration and insurance to SDAPCD throughout the project life and comply with recordkeeping and audit requirements; annual reports are to include:
  - Number of trips
  - Mileage
  - Any unscheduled maintenance or repairs
- Must maintain the new vehicle(s) in good operating condition according to manufacturer's recommendations
- Must allow SDAPCD, CARB, or designated representatives thereof to inspect the new vehicle(s) upon request at any time for the duration of the project life
- Must obtain written approval from SDAPCD to make any modifications to the engine(s) and/or vehicle(s)
- Must confirm availability of charging infrastructure sufficient to operate the vehicle(s) throughout the project life
- Must provide written proof of zero-emission engine or powertrain certification or verification via CARB or EPA executive order

#### **3.2 Application Process**

Upon approval of this project plan by CARB, SDAPCD will request information and documentation from Casa familiar, which shall include but not be limited to:

- Quotes for vehicle(s) and vehicle wrapping/community branding
- Proof of charging availability
- Amount of renewable electricity powering charging infrastructure
- Completed Grant Program Regulatory Compliance Statement (provided by district)
- Equipment location
- Route map(s)
- Expected trips and ridership
- Tax forms for payment

#### **4. Emission Reductions and Quantification Methodology**

Emission Reductions achieved by the San Ysidro Community Circulator will be calculated using the methodology outlined in the CARB Clean Mobility Benefits Quantification Methodology document. SDAPCD will utilize the Clean Mobility Calculator Tool to quantify reductions for greenhouse gases, diesel particulate matter, NOx, PM2.5, reactive organic gases, passenger auto vehicle miles traveled reductions, and energy use reductions. The Clean Mobility Calculator Tool will be adapted as necessary to match the scope of this project.

##### **4.1 Emission Reductions**

Reductions in greenhouse gases and air pollutants—including particulate matter (PM), reactive organic gases (ROG), and nitrogen oxides (NOx)—will be calculated based on the number of miles driven by the electric shuttle vehicles. Calculations will use emission factors and methods from the California Air Resources Board (CARB), following the tools used in the HVIP program. The District will use CARB's online calculator or an approved equivalent method to determine the amount of pollution reduced beyond what is already required by state, local, and federal rules.

#### **5. Relative Exposure Reductions**

The San Ysidro Community Circulator will result in exposure reduction for riders and drivers who may otherwise use a gas or diesel-powered vehicle or walk or ride a bicycle, which would expose them to the elevated pollution levels in the region.

##### **5.1 Mechanism of Exposure Reduction**

By replacing trips that would otherwise be taken in gasoline- or diesel-powered vehicles, the San Ysidro Community Circulator will help reduce the amount of pollution that residents breathe—especially in areas closest to busy roads and border traffic.

#### **4. Qualitative Benefits**

In addition to measurable pollution reductions, the San Ysidro Community Circulator will deliver several important community benefits:

- Lower exposure to harmful pollutants for shuttle drivers, community members, and others working near vehicles.
- Lower fuel and maintenance costs associated with zero-emission vehicles.
- Opportunities for local organizations and partners to learn from real-world use of clean, zero-emission micro-transit.
- Improved access to schools, parks, clinics, grocery stores, and community services. Even though many key destinations are close by, heavy traffic and limited pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure make travel difficult—especially for residents without a personal vehicle.
- Reduced financial pressure on low-income households who spend a significant portion of their income on transportation.
- Replacement of informal and unregulated shuttle services. For decades, San Ysidro residents have relied on the jitney and other informal shuttles to travel around the neighborhood and to the border.

These services charge unpredictable fares, have no safety oversight, and typically use higher-polluting vehicles. The Circulator will offer a safe, regulated, zero-emission alternative that is community-controlled.

## **5. Key Project Parameters**

### **5.1 Funding Amounts and Eligible Costs**

Casa Familiar is requesting funding only for the purchase of vehicles. No funds are being requested for operations, staffing, or overhead. Requested items:

- Volkswagen ID. Buzz (standard shuttle): \$70,000
- Alternative option if unavailable: Kia Niro EV (\$45,000)
- Ford eTransit (ADA-accessible shuttle): \$125,000
- Vehicle wrapping and community branding (both vehicles): \$7,000

**Total Funding Requested: \$202,000**

## **6. Project Selection**

### **6.1 Selection Criteria**

The San Diego County Air Pollution Control District will review applications to confirm they meet the goals of the CERP and the requirements of the San Ysidro Community Circulator program. Funding decisions will be based on available incentive funds and input from the Community Steering Committee. If there are more applications than available funds, projects will be ranked based on alignment with CERP priorities, including:

- Passenger Vehicles Strategy 5, Action 8: Implement flexible fleet programs to improve first/last-mile connections, including free electric shuttle services.
- Passenger Vehicles Strategy 2: Support incentive programs that reduce emissions from passenger vehicles and expand zero-emission alternatives.
- Passenger Vehicles Strategy 4: Improve the experience and safety of pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders crossing the border, while reducing car trips and associated emissions.

## **7. Reporting Requirements**

To receive funding under this program, the San Ysidro Community Circulator project must comply with the requirements described in Chapter 6 of the CAPP Incentives 2025 Guidelines. This will involve the preparation of Yearly reports, which SDAPCD will prepare based on information collected from project participants. Some of the information to be included in these reports is described below:

CAPP Incentives reporting requirements for Yearly Reports:

- Report the required project information in the CARL Database
- Report program-level information in the CAPP Incentives Supplemental Document for CERP projects funded with CAPP incentives
- Output generated by the Required Reports utility of CARL Database
- Contract execution and liquidation status for each grant year of CAPP incentives

- A list of any projects identified as nonperforming and a brief narrative of any related enforcement actions

Participants must ensure that project-related information is complete, correct, supported by documentation, and supplied to SDAPCD upon request for the preparation of reports. Violation of or failure to meet program requirements may result in a request by SDAPCD for Casa Familiar to return funds in proportion to the time program requirements have not been met. Meanwhile, SDAPCD must acknowledge that the most up-to-date reporting requirements have been received and incorporated, and commit to maintaining documents in support of the reports in the District's system of record. Finally, this documentation must be made available to CARB staff upon request.

The above is not an exhaustive list of reporting requirements for participants in this program. Please refer to the CAPP Incentives 2025 Guidelines for a complete list.