2026 EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS CONFERENCE AGENDA

October 18–20, 2026 | Pismo Beach, CA

&

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING AND FORUM AGENDA

October 20–21, 2026 | Pismo Beach, CA

Sunday, October 18

1:00 - 5:00 PM *Lower Lobby*	**Registration Open**

1:00 - 4:30 PM	**Mobile Workshop: Wine Tasting**
	Enjoy stunning coastal views at the Central Coast Aquarium while savoring a curated outdoor wine tasting hosted by Stephen Ross Wine Cellars. With harvest season in full swing, you'll get an insider's look at how grapes journey from vine to bottle. Hear firsthand stories from an experienced winemaker as you sample some of San Luis Obispo County's finest wines. Before and after, explore the aquarium and take in all it has to offer.
	
	Complimentary shuttle bus departs the Cliffs Hotel from lobby at 1 pm and returns at 4:30 pm OR
	Drive yourself to 50 San Juan Street, Avila Beach, CA 93424
	
	Mobile Workshop: Choose Your Own SLO County Adventure
	California's Central Coast has so much to offer and San Luis Obispo County is right in the heart of it all! Below is a curated list of local favorites, from the relaxing to the family-friendly adventure.
	• Pismo Preserve Hike (5 minutes from hotel)
	• Explore Downtown Pismo Beach (5 minutes from hotel)
	• Visit a Museum in the City of San Luis Obispo (15 minutes from hotel)
	  ◦ San Luis Obispo Museum of Art
	  ◦ San Luis Obispo Children's Museum
	  ◦ Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa
	• Have a beach day
	• Enjoy the hotel

6:00 - 7:30 PM *Outdoor Lawn*	**Welcome to Pismo Beach: Opening Reception** Join your colleagues for drinks and snacks with a breathtaking view of the Pacific Ocean.

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Monday, October 19

7:30 AM – 4:00 PM *Lower Lobby*	**Registration Table Open**
7:30 AM *Lower Lobby*	**Breakfast Opens**
8:00 – 8:30 AM *Main Ballroom*	**Welcome to the San Luis Obispo Region** Speaker: • **Carla Wixom**, Mayor, City of Morro Bay & SLOCOG Board President **Regionalism on the Coast: Working Together to Connect California** Learn how California's Central Coast advocates, coordinates, and moves as one connected region. The Central Coast Coalition, formed in 2010, is where this partnership comes to life. This session will highlight how agencies up and down the U.S. 101 corridor work together to elevate shared priorities, align with state goals, and deliver transportation solutions that support safety, mobility, economic vitality, and climate action. From freight and goods movement to multimodal corridors and rural highway needs, the Coalition demonstrates how regionalism turns local challenges into a stronger Central Coast voice. Central Coast Coalition Members: • **Pete Rodgers**, Executive Director, San Luis Obispo Council of Governments • **Binu Abraham**, Executive Director, San Benito Council of Governments • **Sarah Christensen**, P.E., Executive Director, Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission • **Scott Eades**, District Director, Caltrans • **Sarkes Khachek**, Programming Director, Santa Barbara County Association of Governments • **Marjie Kirn**, Executive Director, Santa Barbara County Association of Governments • **Todd Muck**, Executive Director, Transportation Agency for Monterey County • **Maura Twomey**, Executive Director, Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments

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Monday, October 19 (cont.)

8:30 – 10:30 AM *Main Ballroom*	**Rapid Fire Innovations** Share with your colleagues (in two minutes or less) a new project, study, revenue enhancement, or other innovation your regional organization is pursuing. Handouts are welcome but not required; this is a Powerpoint-free zone. Facilitator: • **Ty Warner**, Executive Director, Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission
10:30 – 10:45 AM	**Break**
10:45 AM – 12:00 PM *Main Ballroom*	**Rapid Fire Innovations (cont.)**
12:00 – 1:15 PM *Main Ballroom*	**Lunch & Keynote** Hear from the executive director of the California Association of Councils of Government (CALCOG), Bill Higgins. He will address the value of developing a strong state vision for regional governance and how CALCOG works toward that vision. He will also discuss the elements that make regional planning in California unique. Speaker: • **Bill Higgins**, Executive Director, California Association of Councils of Governments
1:15 – 1:30 PM	**Break**
1:30 – 2:15 PM *Main Ballroom*	**Positioning Your Regional Council and Demonstrating Value** Explore how regional councils and MPOs can elevate their visibility, strengthen relationships with local officials and stakeholders, and clearly communicate their value to member communities. Dive into strategies such as fee-for-service, how to support capacity-constrained municipalities and counties, and approaches to demonstrating return on investment to members. Speakers: • **Brian Martin**, Executive Director, Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission • **Rachel Miller**, Executive Director, Region 9 (Eastern Panhandle Regional Planning and Development Council) • **Amy O'Leary**, Executive Director, Southeast Michigan Council of Governments

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Monday, October 19 (cont.)

2:15 – 3:00 PM *Main Ballroom*	**Partnerships & External Relationships** Hear how regional councils and MPOs build and manage relationships with universities, civic groups, and government partners to create stronger regions. This session will also discuss how to strengthen intergovernmental cooperation with municipalities and counties within your jurisdiction. Speakers: • **Andy Gunning**, Executive Director, Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments • **Jim Kinnick**, Executive Director, Eastgate Regional Council of Governments • **Anna McQuiston**, Executive Director, Mid-South Development District
3:00 – 3:45 PM *Main Ballroom*	**Thought Leadership: Strategies to Succeed** Regions succeed when regional councils and MPOs are trusted thought leaders in their communities, using their expertise to bring stakeholders together and inform critical decision-making. Hear how colleagues build their reputations through data, storytelling, and their unique expertise. Speakers: • **Becky Bradley**, Executive Director, Leigh Valley Planning Commission • **Casey Covington**, Executive Director, Metroplan Little Rock • **Sandy Spang**, Executive Director, Lake Erie West Regional Council
3:45 – 4:00 PM	**Break**
4:00 – 5:00 PM *Main Ballroom*	**Unconference** You set the agenda for this session! Earlier in the day, attendees will be prompted to suggest discussion topics and vote on which topics interest them the most. Top vote-getters will form the basis for several roundtable discussions, each led by the person who suggested that table's topic. You are free to attend the discussion of greatest interest to you and may move between groups.
5:30 PM *Meet in hotel lobby*	**Dinner on your own in Downtown San Luis Obispo** If you wish to join, transportation will be provided to (and from) downtown San Luis Obispo where you may enjoy dinner at one of its restaurants. SLOCOG staff has curated a list of great places to dine or venture out on your own. **Shuttle bus leaves hotel:** 5:30 P.M. **Shuttle bus leaves SLO:** 8:30 P.M. Greeting attendees in Downtown SLO: • **Erica A. Stewart**, City of San Luis Obispo Mayor & SLOCOG Board Member

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Tuesday, October 20

7:00 - 7:30 AM *Hotel Lobby*	**Choose Your Stride: Morning Run/Walk** Jumpstart your day with a morning walk or jog with fellow attendees.
7:30 AM - 4:00 PM *Lower Lobby*	**Registration Table Open**
7:30 AM *Lower Lobby*	**Breakfast Opens**
8:00 - 8:30 AM *Main Ballroom*	**Five Cities Project: Partnership, Innovation, and Project Delivery** Behind every successful transportation project is a story of collaboration, creativity, and problem-solving. San Luis Obispo County's dynamic transportation-planning duo will take you behind the scenes of the Five Cities Multimodal Transportation Network Enhancement Project, currently under construction in Pismo Beach. Learn how a decade of partnership transformed a complex transportation challenge into an innovative, multimodal solution for the region. Speakers: • **Paul Valadão,** District 5 Office Chief & Project Manager, Caltrans • **Stephen Hanamaikai**, Transportation Planner, San Luis Obispo Council of Governments About the Five Cities Project The Five Cities Multimodal Transportation Network Enhancement Project is being implemented by Caltrans and the City of Pismo Beach and is sponsored by the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG). The project is funded through a combination of SLOCOG discretionary funds and competitive state grant funds. This project will construct three components: a third part-time travel lane on southbound U.S. 101, a park-and-ride lot, and a segment of a shared-use path. Learn more here.

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Tuesday, October 20 (cont.)

Executive Directors Programming		Senior Managers Programming	
8:30 – 9:30 AM *Main Ballroom*	**Managing Your Internal Workforce** Explore strategies to build staff capacity, develop talent, and foster a positive culture. Hear from colleagues on challenges such as staff burnout, limited staffing resources, and balancing in-person vs. virtual settings for effective team collaboration. Speakers: • **Michael Dunn**, Executive Director, Region 1 Planning Council • **Grace Gallucci**, Executive Director, Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency • **James Turnwald**, Executive Director, Michiana Area Council of Governments	**8:30 – 9:00 AM** *Breakout Room* *Board Members welcome to attend*	**Leveling Up & Your Own Leadership Journey** Hear from an experienced regional executive about building the skills to level up your leadership. Through a candid conversation and interactive discussion, gain practical advice on areas for self-development, the skills to lead teams effectively, and how to prepare for future leadership opportunities. Speaker: • **Chuck Wemple**, Former Executive Director, Houston-Galveston Area Council
9:30 – 10:15 AM *Main Ballroom*	**Managing Board Dynamics** In this session, hear how fellow executive directors keep board members engaged, navigate political differences, and manage challenging personalities. We'll also explore board structures that support effective governance. Speakers: • **Kome Ajise**, Executive Director, Southern California Association of Governments • **Aileen Bouclé**, Executive Director, Miami-Dade Transportation Planning Organization • **Ryan Vogt**, Executive Director, Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments	**9:00 – 10:15 AM** *Breakout Room* *Board Members welcome to attend*	**Strategic Planning and Open Discussion** An opportunity for peer discussion and knowledge sharing. Participants will begin with a discussion of strategic plans and follow with an open discussion exploring topics chosen by participants on leadership challenges and opportunities. Facilitator: • **Michelle Lacewell,** Deputy Director and Chief Communications Officer, Greater Nashville Regional Council

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Tuesday, October 20 (cont.)

	Executive Directors Programming		Senior Managers and Board Member Programming
10:15 – 10:30 AM	**Break**		
10:30 – 11:30 AM *Main Ballroom*	**Culture & Continuity** Explore strategies for developing and retaining talent, from emerging professionals to senior leaders. Discuss organizational succession planning, leadership transition strategies, and finding the right executive team structure to ensure long-term stability and continuity. Speakers: • **Audra Koester Thomas**, Executive Director, Maricopa Association of Governments • **Pete Rodgers**, Executive Director, San Louis Obispo Council of Governments • **Chuck Wemple**, Former Executive Director, Houston-Galveston Area Council	**10:30 – 11:30 AM** *Breakout Room*	**Engaging the Board: Staff and Board Perspectives** Drawing on both Board and staff perspectives, speakers will share practical approaches to effective communication, productive partnerships, and leadership collaboration. The session will highlight strategies for engaging board members as partners in advancing organizational goals and priorities. Facilitators: • **Erik Johnson**, Deputy Director of Operations, Sacramento Area Council of Governments • **Karen Kieth**, Board Appointee, Indian Nations Council of Governments
11:30 AM – 12:00 PM *Main Ballroom*	**Meeting Your Own Needs as Executive Director** Leading requires managing the needs of your team, but long-term success also depends on investing in yourself. Discuss strategies for prioritizing your professional growth and supporting both your organization and yourself. Speaker: • **Kristina Egan**, Executive Director, Greater Portland Council of Governments	**11:30 AM – 12:00 PM** *Breakout Room*	**Legislative Updates: What You Need to Know** Hear the latest legislative updates from Washington, DC and how you can make your voice heard on issues from transportation to housing to grantmaking and more. Speaker: • **Leeann Sinpatanasakul**, Director of Policy, National Association of Regional Councils

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Tuesday, October 20 (cont.)

	Executive Directors Programming	Senior Managers and Board Programming	
12:00 – 12:15 PM	**Break**		
12:15 – 1:15 PM *Outdoor Courtyard*	**Lunch & Speaker** **Congressman Salud Carbajal** represents California's 24th Congressional District, serving communities across Santa Barbara County and portions of San Luis Obispo and Ventura counties. First elected to Congress in 2016, he serves on the House Transportation and Infrastructure, Armed Services, and Agriculture Committees and has championed investments in infrastructure, economic opportunity, and community development.		
1:15 – 1:30 PM	**Break**		
1:30 – 3:15 PM *Main Ballroom*	**Executive Directors Council Meeting** Everyone is welcome to attend.	**1:30 – 3:15 PM** *Meet in hotel lobby*	**Mobile Workshop: Point San Luis Lighthouse** (Trip 1) Enjoy a docent-led interpretive tour of the Point San Luis Lighthouse. Experience the rich history of a beautifully restored Lighthouse, the Hornhouse, and other structures on the property. Get a glimpse into the lives of Lighthouse Keepers and their families while helping keep the "jewel of the Central Coast" preserved. The mission is to restore, preserve, maintain, and operate the Point San Luis Lighthouse Station, circa 1890, as a historical, educational, and recreational site, for the use and enjoyment of the public. Shuttle leaves from the lobby promptly at 1:30.

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Tuesday, October 20 (cont.)

3:15 - 3:30 PM	**Break**
3:30 - 5:30 PM *Meet in hotel lobby*	**Mobile Workshop: Point San Luis Lighthouse** (Trip 2) Enjoy a docent-led interpretive tour of the Point San Luis Lighthouse. Experience the rich history of a beautifully restored Lighthouse, the Hornhouse, and other structures on the property. Get a glimpse into the lives of Lighthouse Keepers and their families while helping keep the "jewel of the Central Coast" preserved. The mission is to restore, preserve, maintain, and operate the Point San Luis Lighthouse Station, circa 1890, as a historical, educational, and recreational site, for the use and enjoyment of the public. Shuttle leaves from the lobby promptly at 3:30. **Mobile Workshop: Bike to Avila Beach** Hosted by SLOCOG Transportation Planner and local biking aficionado **John DiNunzio**, enjoy a group ride from The Cliffs Hotel to the cozy beach town of Avila Beach, approximately eight miles roundtrip. Bikes and helmets will be provided. Some biking will be on the road, and there will be moderate hills and terrain along the way.
6:30 - 8:00 PM *SeaVenture Restaurant*	**Board Dinner** Join your fellow Board members for a social dinner. By invitation only. Shuttle leaves from the lobby promptly at 6:15.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING AND FORUM AGENDA

October 20–21, 2026 | Pismo Beach, CA

Wednesday, October 21

8:30 – 9:00 AM *Lower Lobby*	**Board of Directors Breakfast**
9:00 – 10:30 AM *Main Ballroom*	**Board of Directors Meeting**
10:30 – 10:45 AM	**Break**
10:45 AM – 1:00 PM *Main Ballroom*	**Board Forum** Speaker: • **Leslie Pollner**, Senior Managing Director, Manatt Government Strategies *Lunch will be provided starting at 10:45 for those departing early.*

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