



# California @ 50 Million: Goals for the Future

## Vehicle Miles Traveled

### Goal

Reduce greenhouse gas emissions through reductions in vehicle miles traveled.

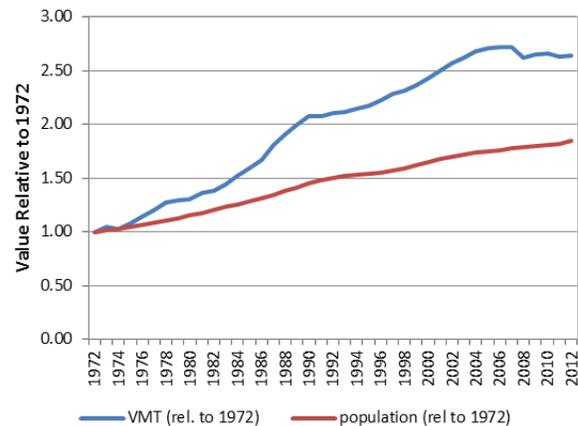
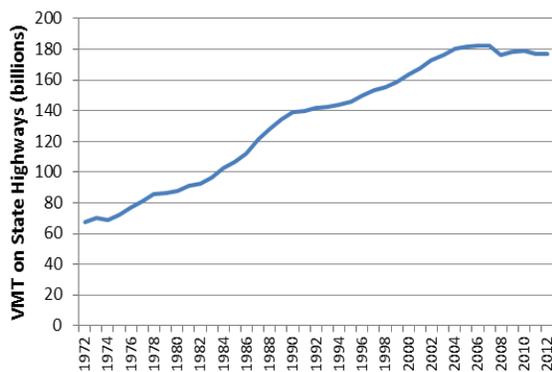
### Why it is Important

Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) are associated with higher emissions of air pollutants and greenhouse gases (GHG) and congestion. Therefore, reduced VMT provide environmental, safety, and economic benefits. Reductions in VMT can be achieved through smarter land use choices that reduce the need to drive, alternatives to driving such as public transit, walking and biking, and pricing policies that discourage single-occupant vehicle trips. Higher density, mixed-use, and transit-oriented development can all reduce the need for driving by providing access to destinations in close proximity.

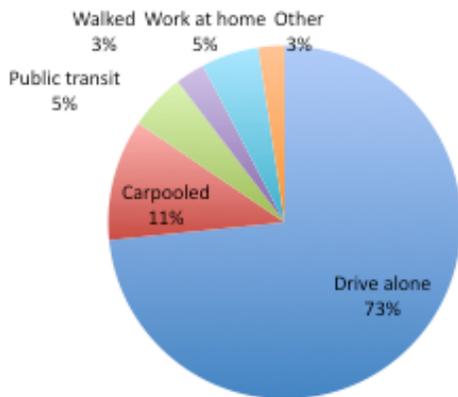
Recent analysis has also shown that *active transportation* choices, such as walking and biking, also provide significant public health benefits. The reductions in adverse health outcomes attributable to an increase in walking or biking can outweigh the health benefits resulting from emission reductions.<sup>1</sup>

### Recent Trends

Vehicle miles traveled in California have increased substantially over the past forty years. According to measurements of VMT made by Caltrans on the state highway system, VMT has more than tripled since 1972. The rate of increase has far outpaced population growth over the same time period.<sup>2</sup>



As VMT have increased, GHG emissions from the passenger vehicles have increased nearly in lockstep. As the state's GHG emission standards for passenger vehicles, GHG emissions should start to decline. Criteria air pollutants, on the other hand, have declined as a result of stringent tailpipe emission standards that have been in place since the 1960s.



Californians drive to work alone in large numbers, though use of public transit is higher in some of the state's urban areas. Average travel time to work in California is just over 27 minutes. Job density in the state is declining, which can contribute to longer commutes and make it more difficult to travel to work by public transportation.<sup>4,5</sup>

## What California is Doing

In 2008, California adopted Senate Bill (SB) 375, which directs the state's 18 regional metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) to develop regional transportation plans that meet per capita GHG emission reduction targets through the integration of transportation and land use planning. The reductions are to be achieved through implementation of a sustainable communities strategy (SCS) developed as part of the regional transportation plan. Targets have been set for 2020 and 2035. The state's four largest MPOs and several smaller MPOs have developed SCSs that show compliance with the targets. The MPOs in the San Joaquin Valley are slated to complete their SCSs in 2014 and 2015.

The per capita GHG emission reduction targets for the state's MPOs range from 1 percent increase to an 8 percent decrease by 2020 and 1 percent increase to a 16 percent decrease in 2035.

## Data Sources and Scale

[1] [http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/CCDPHP/Documents/ITHIM\\_Technical\\_Report11-21-11.pdf](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/CCDPHP/Documents/ITHIM_Technical_Report11-21-11.pdf)

[2] VMT data from Caltrans Traffic Data Branch: <http://traffic-counts.dot.ca.gov/>

[3] Population data from CA Department of Finance and US Census: <http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/data/> and [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)

[4] Commute data from the US Census American Community Survey, 2012: <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk>

[5] Job density patterns from Kolko, 2011: [http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R\\_211JKR.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_211JKR.pdf)