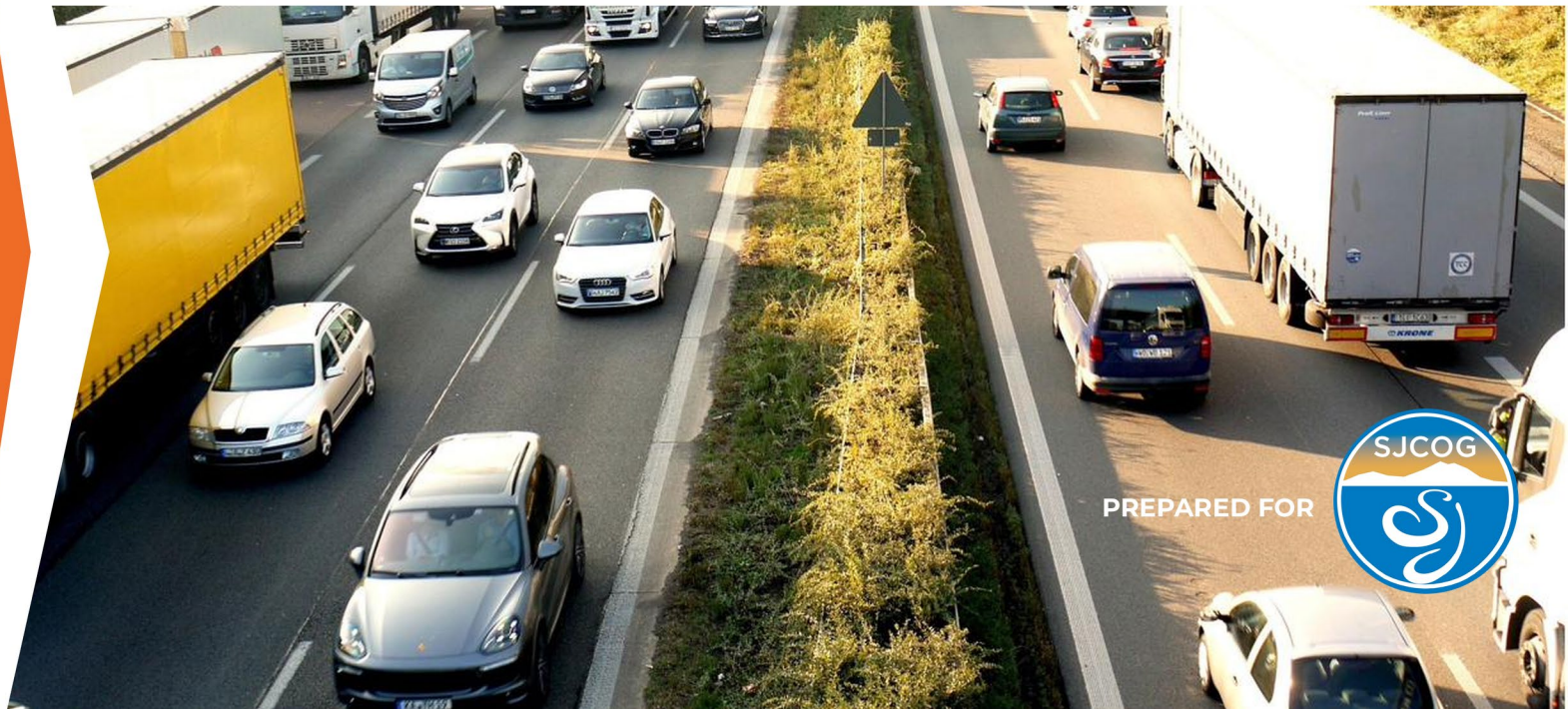
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2026

SAN JOAQUIN

REGIONAL ANALYST

LONG-DURATION COMMUTING IN SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY



PREPARED FOR SJCOG

This *Regional Analyst* examines the geography, demographics, and policy implications of two types of long-duration commuting in San Joaquin County: "super-commuting," defined as traveling 90 minutes or more each way between home and work, and the broader category of "long-haul commuting," defined as traveling 60 minutes or more each way.

This report builds on the preceding Regional Analyst,[1] which examined San Joaquin County's interregional commute flows and documented the county's strong labor-market ties to the Bay Area, Sacramento, and the broader North San Joaquin Valley. That analysis showed that the county's strongest external labor-market connection is with the Bay Area, including about 61,000 outbound commuters in 2024, most bound for Alameda County. This report shifts from where residents commute to how long those commutes take, where the longest burdens are concentrated, and which workers are most affected.

By either measure, San Joaquin County stands out as one of the nation's most extreme long-duration commuting counties. According to the 2020–2024 American Community Survey (ACS),[2] about one in ten commuters, roughly 30,240 residents, travel 90 minutes or more each way. About one in five, roughly 60,640 residents, travel 60 minutes or more each way.

Did you know? In San Joaquin County:

- 1 in 10 commuters (10 percent) travel 90 minutes or more each way to work.
- 1 in 5 commuters (20 percent) travel 60 minutes or more each way to work.
- About 13 percent of all commuters leave for work before 5 a.m.
- Super-commuting (90+ minutes each way) is concentrated in the county's southwest Bay Area-facing communities:
    - Lathrop (17.5 percent)
    - Mountain House CDP (17 percent)
    - Tracy (13.8 percent)
    - Manteca (12.6 percent)

San Joaquin County's 10 percent super-commuter rate is exceptionally high: more than 2.6 times California's rate of 3.8 percent and 3.7 times the national rate of 2.7 percent. These figures reflect a structural feature of the regional economy. San Joaquin County functions as part of the Bay Area's extended labor market, where comparatively lower housing costs and higher Bay

Stockton Leads the Nation's Largest Cities in Super-Commuter Rate

Among all 32,330 U.S. Census places, Stockton ranks seventh nationally in the number of super-commuters, behind only much larger cities such as New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia, Houston, and Phoenix. Unlike those cities, however, Stockton's ranking reflects unusually intense long-distance commuting rather than sheer population size: 9.2 percent of Stockton commuters travel 90 minutes or more each way, compared with 6.9 percent in New York and just 1.7 percent in Phoenix.

Top 10 U.S. Census Places (Incorporated Cities & CDPs) by Super-Commuter Count, Ranked by Rate, 2020-2024

Rate Rank	Place	Total Workers	90+ Min Count	90+ Min Rate	Count Rank
1	**Stockton, CA**	**123,220**	**11,280**	**9.2%**	**7th**
2	New York, NY	3,263,450	226,730	6.9%	1st
3	Baltimore, MD	222,440	9,410	4.2%	9th
4	Philadelphia, PA	592,850	19,980	3.4%	4th
5	Los Angeles, CA	1,526,460	47,470	3.1%	2nd
6	Chicago, IL	1,078,010	33,510	3.1%	3rd
7	San Jose, CA	401,970	9,310	2.3%	10th
8	Houston, TX	978,340	18,800	1.9%	5th
9	San Antonio, TX	611,090	11,180	1.8%	8th
10	Phoenix, AZ	671,320	11,300	1.7%	6th

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table B08303 (place-level)

Area wages create strong incentives for residents to accept exceptionally long commutes. This pattern is concentrated along the I-205 and I-580 corridors and is especially pronounced among men, who make long-distance commutes at roughly twice the rate of women. As a 2026 San Francisco Chronicle investigation observed, San Joaquin County has emerged as "America's capital of super-commuters."[3]

California's Super-Commuting in Context

California ranks third nationally in the share of workers commuting 90 minutes or more each way, behind only New York and New Jersey. Unlike the Northeast, where extreme commuting is concentrated around a single metropolitan core, California's super-commuting is distributed across multiple major employment centers, including the Bay Area, Los Angeles, San Diego, and Sacramento, each linked to lower-cost surrounding communities through long-distance commute corridors. California also has the nation's largest absolute number of super-commuters, with approximately 574,000 workers making these trips in 2020–2024. Within this statewide pattern, San Joaquin County stands out as the highest-rate large county in the nation's highest-volume super-commuting state. That combination, extreme local concentration within a high-volume statewide pattern, means that interventions aimed at San Joaquin County's commute burden cannot rely on statewide solutions alone; the county's scale and geography require targeted regional strategies.

Top-5 U.S. States by Super-Commuter Share

Rank	State	2015–2019 5-year ACS	2020–2024 5-year ACS	Change (pp)
1	New York	5.8%	5.3%	- 0.5
2	New Jersey	5.5%	4.5%	- 1.0
3	California	4.2%	3.8%	-0.4
4	Maryland	4.6%	3.6%	-1.0
5	West Virginia	3.6%	3.4%	-0.2

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-year estimates, Table B08303

The Geography of County Super-Commuting

Comparing only large U.S. counties with at least 200,000 commuters, counties substantial enough to anchor major regional labor markets, highlights how unusual San Joaquin County's commuting patterns are nationally. Among 149 such counties, San Joaquin County ranks first in the share of workers who super-commute (90 minutes or more each way).

Another North San Joaquin Valley (NSJV) county, Stanislaus County, ranks third, with 8.6 percent of commuters classified as super-commuters. The other large counties with similarly high rates are primarily associated with the New York metropolitan area, including the Bronx (8.8 percent), Queens (8.3 percent), and Nassau County on Long Island (7.6 percent).

The table below shows California's top counties according to their share of super-commuters. San Joaquin County ranks first at 10 percent, while Merced ranks third (9.4 percent) and Stanislaus ranks fourth (8.6 percent).[4] Many of the other counties near the top of the list are small rural counties where residents must travel long distances to reach major job centers. The NSJV counties stand out because they combine very high super-commuter rates with large populations and substantial numbers of commuters with lengthy commutes.

California Counties by Super-Commuter Share, 2020-2024

Rank	Geography	90+ Min %	90+ Min Count
1	**San Joaquin**	**10.0%**	**30,240**
2	Mariposa	9.7%	630
3	**Merced**	**9.4%**	**9,790**
4	**Stanislaus**	**8.6%**	**18,330**
5	Calaveras	8.5%	1,310
—	*California*	*3.8%*	*574,250*
—	*United States*	*2.7%*	*3,680,300*

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table B08303.

Within San Joaquin County its super-commuting geography is fundamentally the geography of the Bay

Area commute corridor. Lathrop posts the county's highest super-commuter rate at 17.5 percent, followed by Mountain House CDP at 17 percent, Tracy at 13.8 percent, and Manteca at 12.6 percent. In these communities along the I-205, I-580, and SR-120 corridors, roughly one in six commuters travels 90 minutes or more each way to work. Nationally, among places with at least 10,000 commuters, Lathrop ranks second in the nation by super-commuter rate, Tracy ranks sixth, and Manteca ranks tenth.

"Super-Commuter" Shares by Community, 2020-2024

Community	% of commuters traveling 90+ minutes one way
Lathrop	17.5%
Mountain House CDP	17.0%
Tracy	13.8%
Manteca	12.6%
San Joaquin County	*10.0%*
Stockton	9.2%
Ripon	4.3%
California	*3.8%*
Lodi	3.1%
United States	*2.7%*
Escalon	2.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-year estimates, Table B08303

Although Stockton's 9.2 percent super-commuter rate is slightly below the county average, the city still accounts for the county's largest concentration of super-commuters, with approximately 11,280 workers, more than one-third of the county total. As highlighted in the opening call-out box, this gives Stockton the highest super-commuter rate among the nation's ten largest cities by super-commuter count. By contrast, communities more oriented toward local employment patterns, such as Lodi (3.1 percent) and Escalon (2 percent), record rates near or below the national average.

30,240

San Joaquin County workers who commute 90+ minutes each way

NSJV Super-Commuting in Context

- Among U.S. counties with at least 100,000 commuters, San Joaquin County ranks second nationally in the share of super-commuters, Merced ranks third (9.4 percent), and Stanislaus ranks sixth (8.6 percent).
- Together, the three NSJV counties account for approximately 58,360 super-commuters, 10.2 percent of all super-commuters in California, but only 4.1 percent of all commuters.
- San Joaquin County alone accounts for 5.3 percent of California's super-commuters despite representing only 2.0 percent of the state's commuters overall.

The Geography of County Long-Haul Commuting

The 90-minute "super-commute" threshold captures San Joaquin County's most extreme commutes, but a broader group of residents also faces long daily travel. Between 2020 and 2024, about 20.1 percent of county commuters (roughly 60,640 people) traveled 60 minutes or more each way to work. That rate is nearly double California's 11.1 percent rate and more than twice the national rate of 8.6 percent.

California Counties by Long-Haul Commuter Share, 2020-2024

Rank	Geography	60+ Min %	60+ Min Count
1	San Benito	25.6%	7,180
2	Contra Costa	21.2%	92,090
3	**San Joaquin**	**20.1%**	**60,640**
4	Calaveras	18.9%	2,900
5	Amador	18.9%	2,610
—	*California*	*11.1%*	*1,689,100*
—	*United States*	*8.6%*	*11,616,160*

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS5-Year Estimates, Table S0801.

By this broader measure, San Joaquin County ranks third among California counties, behind only San Benito and Contra Costa. The pattern is especially concentrated in Bay Area-facing communities. About one-third of commuters in Mountain House,

"Long-haul Commuters" Shares by Community, 2020-2024	
Community	% of commuters traveling 60+ minutes one way
Mountain House CDP	35.4%
Lathrop	33.9%
Tracy	32.6%
Manteca	25.0%
San Joaquin County	*20.1%*
Stockton	16.5%
Ripon	13.3%
California	*11.1%*
United States	*8.6%*
Escalon	8.5%
Lodi	7.9%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-year estimates, Table S0801	

Lathrop, and Tracy travel at least an hour each way, compared with 20.1 percent countywide. Communities more oriented toward local employment patterns, such as Lodi and Escalon, have long-haul commuter rates near or below the national average.

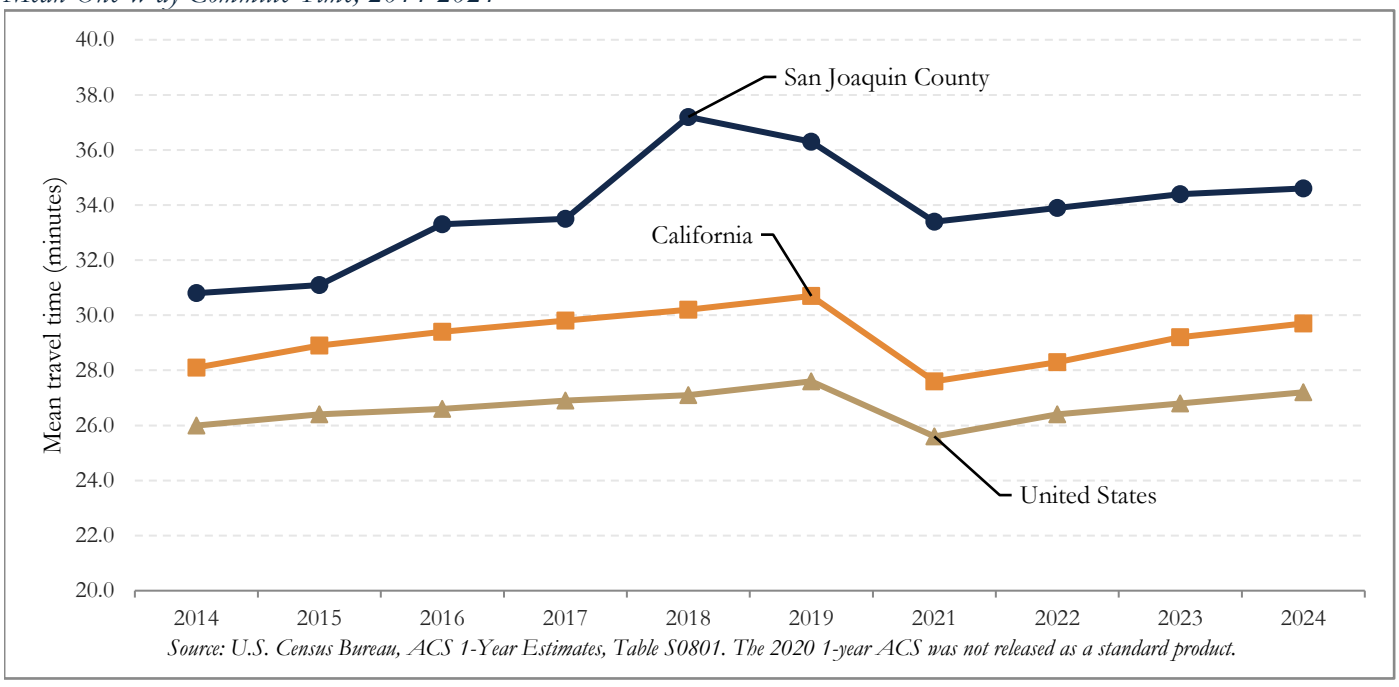
1/3rd

Share of all workers in Lathrop, Mountain House, and Tracy who commute 60+ minutes each way

Average Commute Trends

San Joaquin County's average one-way commute increased sharply between 2014 and 2018, rising from 30.8 minutes to 37.2 minutes in just four years. Commute times fell during the pandemic as many long-duration commuters shifted to remote or hybrid work, but they have steadily increased again since 2021, reaching 34.6 minutes in 2024. Although current commute times remain below their pre-pandemic peak, they are still well above mid-2010s levels and continue to substantially exceed both California and U.S. averages. The post-pandemic decline likely reflects changes in work patterns as much as changes in commute duration. In the ACS, workers who worked from home during the survey week are not included in commute-time estimates, meaning that as more long-distance commuters shifted to remote or hybrid work, some were no longer counted in measured commute times even though they may still hold long-distance jobs.

Mean One-Way Commute Time, 2014-2024



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 1-Year Estimates, Table S0801. The 2020 1-year ACS was not released as a standard product.

FRAMING LONG-DURATION COMMUTING

Average commute times provide another way to understand the scale of long-duration commuting in San Joaquin County. According to the 2020–2024 ACS, the county's average one-way commute was 34.1 minutes, substantially longer than both the California average (28.7 minutes) and the national average (26.4 minutes). The more recent 2024 one-year estimate ranks San Joaquin County fifth among California counties and among the top five percent of counties nationally for commute length.

At the community level, the county's longest average commutes are concentrated in the same Bay Area-facing communities that dominate the super-commuting pattern. Mountain House records the county's longest average commute at 49.6 minutes, followed by Lathrop (45.2 minutes) and Tracy (42.5 minutes). By comparison, the average commute is 31.7 minutes in Stockton and 24.1 minutes in both Escalon and Lodi.

Mean One-Way Commute Time by Community, 2020-2024

Community	Average (minutes)
Mountain House CDP	49.6
Lathrop	45.2
Tracy	42.5
Manteca	37.6
San Joaquin County	*34.1*
Stockton	31.7
California	*28.7*
Ripon	26.8
United States	*26.4*
Escalon	24.1
Lodi	24.1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-year estimates, Table S0801

At the same time, comparisons between the 2015–2019 and 2020–2024 ACS periods show that super-commuter rates declined across most Bay Area corridor communities during and after the pandemic. Mountain House saw the sharpest decline, falling from 27.6 percent to 17.0 percent, while Tracy declined from 15.2 percent to 13.8 percent and Manteca from 14.6 percent to 12.6 percent. Lathrop declined only modestly, from 18.1 percent to 17.5 percent. Stockton was the only major community in the county to record an increase, rising from 8.4 percent to 9.2 percent.

Pre-dawn departure patterns further reinforce the geography of the Bay Area commute corridor. In Tracy, 17.5 percent of non-work-from-home workers leave for work between midnight and 5 a.m., more than triple the national rate of 5.5 percent. Manteca (15.1 percent) and Lathrop (14.4 percent) also record exceptionally high pre-dawn departure rates. These patterns are consistent with workers leaving early to cross the Altamont Pass ahead of peak congestion and reach Bay Area job centers by standard morning start times.[5]

Transportation mode adds another layer to this geography. San Joaquin County's long commutes are overwhelmingly car-based, with most workers commuting 60 minutes or more each way driving alone along the I-205 and I-580 corridors. Yet carpoolers face especially high rates of long commutes. In the 2020–2024 ACS, 27.1 percent of county carpoolers commuted 60 minutes or more each way, compared with 18.7 percent of solo drivers. Public transit serves a much smaller share of commuters, but those who use it often make very long trips: 76 percent of county transit riders commute at least 60 minutes each way, rising to 94.3 percent among long-distance train and commuter rail commuters. San Joaquin County ranks first among large U.S. counties in the share of carpoolers commuting 60 minutes or more each way.

How San Joaquin County's Long-haul Commuters Travel, 2020-2024

Mode of transportation	Share of mode commuting 60+ minutes
Drove alone	18.7%
Carpooled	27.1%
Public transit	76.0%
Long-distance train / commuter rail	94.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-year estimates, Table B08134

These declines in measured commute times do not necessarily mean the county's underlying commute

burden eased after the pandemic. ACS commute-time estimates include only workers who physically traveled to work during the survey week. As more long-distance commuters shifted to remote or hybrid schedules, some were no longer counted in commute-time statistics even though they still held long-distance jobs. Over the same period, the county's work-from-home rate more than doubled, rising from 4.1 percent in 2015–2019 to 10.6 percent in 2020–2024,[6] with the largest increases occurring in the same Bay Area-oriented communities that recorded the biggest declines in super-commuting.

The evidence suggests that many long-distance commuters did not stop working in Bay Area labor markets so much as they reduced how often they physically made the trip. Even after that shift, however, the number of workers still making exceptionally long commutes remains historically high.

Long-Duration Commutes are Unevenly Shared

Long-duration commuting is not evenly distributed across San Joaquin County's workforce. Men are substantially more likely than women to make the county's longest commutes, leave for work before dawn, and work outside their county of residence. In the 2020–2024 ACS,[7] 25.9 percent of male workers in San Joaquin County commuted 60 minutes or more each way, compared with 12.7 percent of female workers. Men were therefore roughly twice as likely as women to be major commuters, a wider gap than in California or the United States overall.

The pattern is especially pronounced in the same Bay Area corridor communities that drive the county's super-commuting profile. In Lathrop, 42.5 percent of male workers commuted 60 minutes or more each way, compared with 22.1 percent of female workers.[8] Mountain House and Tracy show similar patterns, with men roughly twice as likely as women to make one-way commutes of at least an hour. These differences reinforce the broader geography of the Altamont Pass commute: the county's longest-duration commuting is concentrated not only in particular places, but also among particular groups of workers.

The gender pattern also helps explain why remote work and long-distance commuting now coexist. Women in San Joaquin County are more likely than men to work from home, while men remain more concentrated among workers making long physical trips to external job centers.[9] Remote work has therefore changed how often some residents physically commute and who appears in commute-time statistics, but it has not eliminated the county's underlying dependence on long-duration commuting.

Summary and Policy Implications

One in ten San Joaquin County commuters travels 90 minutes or more each way to work. One in five travels at least 60 minutes. The county's strongest external labor-market connection is with the Bay Area, and the commute burdens associated with that connection are concentrated in Bay Area-facing communities along the I-205, I-580, and SR-120 corridors, especially Mountain House, Lathrop, Tracy, and Manteca. These figures place San Joaquin County among the nation's most extreme long-duration commuting counties; more than twice California's rate and nearly four times the national average.

Several related indicators reinforce this geography. Average commute times remain well above state and national levels, and pre-dawn departures are unusually common in corridor communities, consistent with workers leaving early to cross the Altamont Pass before peak congestion. Long-duration commuting is not a single travel behavior. Most of these journeys are made by workers driving alone, but the commute reaches across modes: more than nine in ten commuter rail riders in San Joaquin County travel 60 minutes or more each way, and the county ranks first nationally in the share of carpoolers making trips of that length. Across all modes, the same underlying separation between housing affordability and major employment centers drives the pattern.

The burden is unevenly shared. Men in San Joaquin County are roughly twice as likely as women to commute 60 minutes or more each way and are also more likely to leave before dawn and work outside the county. Remote and

hybrid work have changed this pattern for some residents, particularly in higher-income and professional occupations, by reducing how often they physically make the trip. But remote work has not eliminated the county's underlying commute geography. Many residents remain in jobs that require regular in-person work, and the number of workers still making very long trips remains historically high.

These commute burdens also carry human costs. Long commutes consume time that could otherwise support family life, rest, caregiving, civic participation, and social connection. For workers making these trips daily or several times per week, the burden is not only travel time but also the stress, uncertainty, and household tradeoffs created by long and often unreliable journeys. Long-duration commuting therefore affects not only transportation systems and labor markets, but also the wellbeing of workers, families, and communities.

Policy responses should operate on two levels. First, the region should reduce the immediate costs of long-distance commuting by improving reliability, safety, and travel options along major interregional corridors. This includes corridor management, carpool and managed-lane strategies, commuter rail connections, and first- and last-mile access for workers who rely on transit. Second, the region should reduce the structural need for long commutes over time by expanding access to higher-quality employment within the NSJV itself. Efforts to build that employment base locally, including North Valley THRIVE's work to position the region as a "Translation Destination" within the Northern California Megaregion, can strengthen both the local economy and the broader megaregional economy.[10]

San Joaquin County's commute geography reflects a straightforward but difficult tradeoff: residents gain access to Bay Area wages while absorbing the cost of Bay Area distance. Better transportation connections and a stronger local economy can reduce that cost over time. But for workers leaving before dawn today, and for the families waiting for them to come home, the burden is immediate. It should be treated as both a transportation challenge and a community wellbeing issue.

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This analyst has been prepared by the CBPR. The statements, findings, conclusions, recommendations, and other data in this report are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the San Joaquin Council of Governments.
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[1] See CBPR (2026) San Joaquin Regional Analyst: Interregional Commuting, Work-from-Home, and Personal Income.
[2] Data note: Commute-time estimates are based on U.S. Census ACS data for workers who physically traveled to work; workers who worked from home are not included in these commute-time measures. City and Census Designated Place estimates are useful for identifying local patterns but are based on smaller survey samples, so they should be read as broad indicators rather than precise point estimates.
[3] Letourneau, Connor (2026) America's capital of 'super-commuters' is in California. Now many are hitting a crisis point. *San Francisco Chronicle,* March 2026. https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/commute-work-stockton-san-joaquin-22083814.php
[4] Note: In the 2020-2024 5-year ACS, Merced County had an estimated 103,732 commuters/workers who did not work from home and therefore the county was not considered in the rankings of counties with the larger 200,000 plus worker forces.
[5] Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table S0801, 2020-2024.
[6] Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table S0801, 2015-2019 and 2020-2024.
[7] Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table S0801, 2020-2024.
[8] Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table S0801, 2020-2024.
[9] See CBPR (2026) San Joaquin Regional Analyst: Interregional Commuting, Work-from-Home, and Personal Income.
[10] For further information see descriptions of the North Valley THRIVE initiative at https://northvalleythrive.org/ and details of its Translation Destination Framework at: https://northvalleythrive.org/PDFs/2025_NVTTD_v4.pdf