



## Memorandum

**DATE:** May 3, 2013

**TO:** Alameda County Technical Advisory Committee (ACTAC)

**FROM:** Beth Walukas, Deputy Director of Planning  
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**SUBJECT: Plan Bay Area and the Draft Environmental Impact Report Comments**

### Recommendation

This item is for information only.

### Summary

The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) released the Draft Plan Bay Area on March 22, 2013 and its Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) the following week. Draft Plan Bay Area is the region's first Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), which combines the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) with a coordinated land use strategy aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks and housing the region's population across all income levels, as mandated by Senate Bill 375.

Staff is seeking input on comments developed for both documents, which would be included in a letter and sent to MTC and ABAG staff by the May 16, 2013 deadline. The Draft Plan Bay Area and Environmental Impact Report documents can be found at <http://onebayarea.org/regional-initiatives/plan-bay-area/draft-plan-bay-area.html>.

### Discussion

Following is a summary of staff's comments on Draft Plan Bay Area and the DEIR. Once these comments are finalized, the Executive Director will transmit them to MTC and ABAG.

- Because the Draft Plan was developed in close coordination with elected officials, agency and jurisdiction staff, as well as other community stakeholders, Alameda CTC staff's comments on the Draft Plan focus only on the need to further define certain investment and implementation strategies. Staff supports the adoption of the Project (e.g., the Jobs-Housing Connection alternative that forms the basis of Draft Plan Bay Area), which has been developed with significant public and stakeholder input and incorporates the programs and projects from the Alameda CTC's CWTP and TEP. The Project Alternative is also consistent with Alameda CTC's current transportation policies, goals and objectives.

- We want to reiterate the important role that the Express Lane Network plays in enabling the region to provide a complete high occupancy vehicle lane network that will facilitate and enable the expansion of express bus service, which may be funded with net revenues from the Express Lane Program. It will also be important to ensure that the planning and implementation of the Express Lane Program is done in coordination with other transportation plans and programs, and that a comprehensive approach be undertaken in the corridors for which Express Lanes are planned. Lastly, we have forwarded some minor corrections to the description of the Regional Express Lane Network (Chapter 4 on pages 80 and 81) to MTC staff and recommend that they be reviewed by the MTC Express Lane team and updated accordingly.
- We note that the Draft Plan does not include an investment strategy specifically focused on goods movement, a major function of the region's transportation network and a critical component of the Bay Area's economy. In light of on-going planning activities and potential funding opportunities at the federal and state levels, we recommend that critical infrastructure improvements and programs that support goods movement be called out in Plan Bay Area and that as part of the next RTP a more comprehensive goods movement strategy be developed, including land use considerations related to goods storage and movement. Alameda CTC is about to initiate development of a Countywide Goods Movement Plan that will identify priority projects and programs and inform the next CWTP and RTP.
- While the Plan has made significant progress in meeting new state mandates to link land use and transportation investment, reduce greenhouse gases and house the region's population, there are a number of issues we look forward to working with MTC and ABAG on improving in the next RTP as noted below:
  - It is noted that the regional population, housing and jobs growth numbers and distribution used in Draft Plan Bay Area are consistent with those adopted in the Final Jobs-Housing Connections Strategy adopted in May 2012. However, for the next update of the Plan, careful comparison of actual development patterns to the projections over the next four years should be done. Alameda CTC looks forward to working with Alameda County jurisdictions and the regional agencies in updating and refining these projections as additional data is collected and evaluated over the next several years.
  - We look forward to working with MTC and ABAG on further developing and implementing the policy initiatives outlined in Investment Strategy 6 beginning on page 84. It will be important to work together to define roles and responsibilities for implementation and to engage the public as programs and policies are further defined.
  - We look forward to working with MTC to further define priorities and funding within the Freeway Performance Initiative (FPI), especially as it relates to the development of the Express Lane system and arterial management. We also note that the DEIR states (on page 2.1-33) that the FPI will be expanded to focus heavily on signal coordination along congested arterials; however, the discussion of the FPI within the Draft Plan did not specifically identify this. We are pleased to see that the FPI continues to include the Program for Arterial Signal Synchronization (PASS) under Arterial Management. PASS, through signal re-timing and signal prioritization, benefits all modes and reduces greenhouse gas emissions, and therefore supports both regional and local objectives addressing climate change and complete streets. However, the scope of the

current PASS program is limited and covers only 500 signals across the region annually. Considering the significant number of traffic signals in the region (on the order of approximately 10,000) and the cost effectiveness of the PASS program, we recommend increased funding for this program in this RTP cycle, which will result in improved coordination in arterial management and increased benefits to all roadway users.

- There are a number of implementation issues that the local jurisdictions, CMAs and regional agencies will need to work together to further address, including:
  - The provision of detailed technical guidance on best management practices for mitigating air quality impacts, climate adaptation and sea level rise, and earthquake mitigation and recovery.
  - Guidance on implementation of permit/entitlement streamlining, including use of CEQA streamlining and exemptions that can facilitate infill development and the provision of infrastructure in Priority Development Areas (PDAs).
  - Securing adequate funding for public services and infrastructure necessary to support housing and job growth and create complete communities in Priority Development Areas.
- Staff is currently reviewing the project lists included in the Draft RTP for accuracy and consistency and will provide MTC and ABAG with comments on any discrepancies that are found by the May 16, 2013 deadline.
- Regarding the alternatives analyzed in the DEIR:
  - The differences between the Project and the other alternatives analyzed in the DEIR are relatively minimal. However, Alternatives 4 and 5 contain provisions that are unachievable or would be extremely difficult if not impossible to implement within the timeframe given for achieving the initial greenhouse gas reduction target (2020).
  - The No Project Alternative is not a viable option due to the fact that the region is required to adopt an SCS that achieves the greenhouse gas reduction targets identified by the California Air Resources Board.
  - The Project represents the one alternative that is the most vetted and understood by Bay Area residents, the most consistent with local and countywide plans, and the most comprehensive in addressing the needs of all modes and users while remaining environmentally sound and beneficial.

**Fiscal Impact**

This item is for information only. There is no fiscal impact at this time.

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