



TO: MTC Planning Committee/ABAG Administrative Committee

DATE: February 6, 2015

FR: MTC Executive Director/ABAG Executive Director

RE: Priority Development Areas Criteria Review

Background

In 2007 through the FOCUS program, ABAG and MTC in collaboration with other regional agencies, cities and counties, transit agencies, congestion management agencies, and stakeholders created a framework to have local governments self-identify Priority Development Areas (PDAs) to help support future growth in transit served, infill locations. The Priority Conservation Area (PCA) designation was created at the same time.

Since 2007, over 190 PDAs have been nominated by cities and counties and adopted at the regional level, with PDAs serving as a primary framework for Plan Bay Area and other regional programs such as the One Bay Area Grant program. Among the PDAs, approximately 120 are considered “Planned” with locally adopted planning and zoning supportive of the PDA designation. The remainder are considered “Potential” in locations where the local community has not yet enacted a neighborhood or area-level plan and related zoning.

The criteria developed through FOCUS identified three criteria for areas proposed for PDA designation:

- The area is within an existing community.
- The area is near existing or planned fixed transit (or served by comparable bus service).
- The area is planned or is planning for more housing.

These terms are defined as:

Area: the planning area being proposed for designation as a Priority Development Area. Since the program seeks to support area or neighborhood planning rather than a project-by-project approach to development, the recommended area size is at least 100 acres, which is approximately a 1/4 mile radius.

Existing Community: the area is within an existing urbanized area, lies within an urban growth boundary or limit line if one is established, and has existing or planned infrastructure to support development that will provide or connect to a range of services and amenities that meet the daily needs of residents making non motorized modes of transportation an option.

Housing: the local jurisdiction is planning for a significant increase in housing units in the area to a minimum density of the selected place type from the Station Area Planning Manual, including affordable units, which can also be a part of a mixed use development that provides other daily services, maximizes alternative modes of travel, and makes appropriate land use connections.

Near Transit: (1) an area around an existing rail station or ferry terminal (typically a half-mile around the station), (2) an area served by a bus or bus rapid transit corridor with minimum headways of 20 minutes during peak weekday commute periods or (3) an area defined as a planned transit station by MTC's Resolution 3434.

The criteria for "Near Transit" was amended in 2010 to require that PDAs be within *1/2 mile of either:* a) an existing rail station or ferry terminal; b) along a bus or bus rapid transit corridor with minimum headways of 20 minutes during peak weekday commute periods; or c) a planned transit station included in MTC's Resolution 3434. PDAs already adopted were grandfathered in at the time of this change.

Discussion

These criteria continue to serve the regional agencies well and have created wide support from jurisdictions across the Bay Area. Through the MTC/ABAG-sponsored PDA Planning Grant Program (previously known as the Station Area Planning Program), jurisdictions have adopted plans for 66,000 housing units, 50 million square feet of commercial space and 110,000 jobs—all with convenient access to transit and local amenities. The location of PDAs helped inform land use distributions and regional transportation investments in Plan Bay Area as well as the distribution of flexible county funds through the One Bay Area Grant. Following adoption of the Plan, PDAs have become a central part of Plan Bay Area implementation efforts and related collaborative efforts with local jurisdictions, regional partner agencies, transit agencies, county congestion management agencies and stakeholders.

In response to a request by ABAG Executive Board members, ABAG and MTC staff reviewed the PDA program criteria, focusing specifically on the "Near Transit" requirement—the subject of the request.

As described above, the adopted criteria requires that areas inside a PDA typically be within 1/2 mile of a rail station, ferry terminal; a bus or bus rapid transit corridor with minimum 20 minute headways during peak weekday commute periods; or a planned transit station included in MTC's Resolution 3434. The rationale for setting a 1/2 mile boundary is to ensure that PDA residents and employees of PDA businesses have convenient access to reliable transit service and to improve the use and cost-effectiveness of public transit. This approach is consistent with MTC's Resolution 3434 transit oriented development policy which is designed to ensure that local jurisdictions plan for transit-supportive land uses and densities around the region's transit investments. Locating a jurisdiction's high and medium density development closest to transit makes sense economically (larger employers seek locations within walking distance of transit and density supports small local businesses); environmentally (increased transit use reduces the need to drive and greenhouse gas emissions); and in terms of public health (people that live or work close to transit are more likely to walk or bike to and from the transit station or stop).

A large body of peer-reviewed research including the *Transportation Research Board's Report 95 on Transit Oriented Development*, has found that residents or employees of an area are less likely to use transit service beyond approximately ¼ mile of a station or stop. By electing to allow PDAs to extend ½ mile from transit (as opposed to ¼ mile), the ABAG Executive Board provided flexibility to jurisdictions and transit agencies to maximize the development potential around the station, consistent with adopted regional policy. While a limited number of transit users will access transit without a car beyond the ½ mile, the radius helps identify the highest priority land around key transit investments.

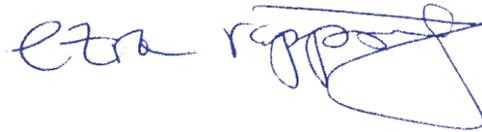
To recognize the importance of providing residents of communities outside of a PDA with access to its transit service and amenities, the One Bay Area Grant provides funding for projects that *connect* these communities to PDAs. This approach continues to support focused growth around the region's transit and infrastructure investments (within PDAs) while improving access to goods, services, and convenient transit for residents that are otherwise less likely to access them in general and by foot or bicycle in particular.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends retaining the current PDA criteria without modification. Based on the history of the PDA criteria and a review of transit access studies, the criteria continues to effectively serve regional and local planning efforts. Staff further recommends that this item be forwarded by the ABAG Administrative Committee to the ABAG Executive Board for approval.



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