

ASSOCIATION OF BAY AREA GOVERNMENTS

Representing City and County Governments of the San Francisco Bay Area



ABAG

Date: May 14, 2015
To: ABAG Executive Board
From: Brad Paul
Deputy Executive Director
Subject: **Update on May 2015 Plan Bay Area Open Houses**

Plan Bay Area 2013 forms the baseline for the Plan Bay Area 2040 update. Since its passage in 2013, staff has had time to reflect on what went well and what didn't work as well. The most frequently cited problems were the compressed schedule, use of technical jargon, a perceived loss of local control and the desire to engage in the kind of dialogue that is hard to achieve in a hearing format where speakers wait hours to get 1-2 minutes at a microphone.

Last May, staff presented you with a memo on what we felt worked and what didn't last time as well as some suggestions on how we might improve future communications and outreach. It reflected our experience with the first Plan as well as suggestions from a series of countywide ABAG delegate meetings that we conducted throughout the region.

At the same time, MTC sought input on public participation from its Policy Advisory Council, the Regional Advisory Working Group, Congestion Management Agencies and a public meeting held in October 2014. Based on this work, MTC released a draft "Public Participation Plan for the 2017 Update of Plan Bay Area" last November.

In December, ABAG staff presented another memo to the ABAG Executive Board with additional recommendations for creating a more inclusive community engagement process for the Plan Bay Area 2017 update. The memo's intent was to offer these strategies as a complement to MTC's draft Public Participation Plan. Unfortunately, that memo created the impression that ABAG and MTC were developing separate public participation plans.

Shortly after our December Board meeting, ABAG and MTC staff met to clarify that there was only one public participation plan, the abovementioned "Public Participation Plan for the 2017 Update of Plan Bay Area," and that we were jointly implementing it. That meeting led to ongoing meetings with staff from both agencies and our consultants to coordinate and further refine the public participation process for the Play Bay Area 2017 update.

Plan Bay Area 2017 Open Houses

With adoption of the final 2015 Public Participation Plan in February 2015, focus shifted to the official launch of the Plan Bay Area update through a series of Open Houses for the public to be

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held in late April and May in all nine Bay Area counties. These meetings constituted the first of three rounds of public workshops related to the Plan, the other meetings to be held in 2016 (on the three proposed scenarios) and 2017 (on the preferred Plan and Draft EIR).

Goals of the Open Houses

- Build awareness for the pending focused update to Plan Bay Area.
- Introduce the public to the planning process, key milestones and issues under consideration.
- Review the linkages between the regional plan and local transportation and land use priorities.
- Review and seek comments on the goals and performance framework for the update, which will build off the 2013 Plan.

Format and Logistics

- Open Houses organized around a set of display stations (described below), each staffed with MTC/ABAG staff who could answer questions on the subject matter.
- Open Houses to be held evenings (Mondays through Thursdays) or Saturdays (10 a.m. to noon) at large, centrally located venues.
- Public participants would visit each station, ask questions and offer comments.

Open House Display Stations

1. **Welcome Table** – Staff offers an orientation to the meeting and facility.
2. **Plan Bay Area 101- Key Milestones** – Staff available to explain process and key tasks related to the next Plan update.
3. **Goals and Targets** – Display station lists proposed goals and targets; staff available to take comments and answer questions. Participants can select their own top three personal priorities from the menu of goals.
4. **Forecasting Future Growth** – Information available about the approach used to forecast population growth and housing needs. Staff available to answer questions.
5. **Transportation Projects** – MTC, CMA and transit agency staff this table, which features regional and county transportation projects in adopted Plan Bay Area for each county. Staff available to take suggestions for additional projects.
6. **Local Planning Priorities in Each County** – Displays customized for each county, with background on local PDAs and other city and county land use priorities, planning efforts and best practices. Staff available to answer questions.
7. **Live/Work/Play**. Participants place color coded push pins on a map that denote where they live, work and play and then connect these pins with pieces of yarn to allow participants to visualize how they live/work/play collectively in the region.

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8. **Partner Agencies** – Caltrans, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District and other interested agencies were invited to participate to discuss the California Transportation Plan and inter-regional travel issues.

Open House Schedule

<u>County</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Where</u>	<u>Attendance</u>
Alameda	4/29	Fairgrounds, Pleasanton	90 people
Contra Costa	4/29	Marriott, Walnut Creek	80 people
San Mateo	5/6	Event Center, San Mateo	70 people
Santa Clara	5/6	Community Ctr., San Jose	65 people
Sonoma	5/7	Freidman Ctr., Santa Rosa	65 people
Napa	5/7	Elks Lodge, Napa	35 people
Solano	5/7	Hilton Inn, Fairfield	30 people
San Francisco	5/13	Hotel Whitcomb, SF	85 people
Marin ¹	5/28	Civic Center, San Rafael	TBD

The Open Houses were staffed by MTC and ABAG staff familiar with the subject matter at each display station. In addition, a number of MTC Commissioners and ABAG Executive Board members were present at each one to circulate throughout the room, talk to stakeholders and participants, and listen to the conversations at the various display stations.

Feedback on GOALS and TARGETS for Plan Bay Area 2040

MTC and ABAG are updating goals and targets for Plan Bay Area 2040. Open House participants selected their three top personal priorities. Results to date are shown below.

¹ ABAG's Marin delegates are hosting an additional workshop Sat., May 16th, 9 a.m. to noon, - Novato City Hall.

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GOALS and TARGETS From 2013 Adopted Plan Bay Area	COUNTIES								
	Alameda	Contra Costa	Marin	Napa	San Francisco	San Mateo	Santa Clara	Solano	Sonoma
Climate Protection									1 (tie)
Adequate Housing	2 (tie)	2		2 (tie)	1	2	2		3
Healthy and Safe Communities	2 (tie)	3 (tie)		1 (tie)				2	
Open Space and Agricultural Preservation				2 (tie)				1	2
Equitable Access		3 (tie)			3	3	3		
Economic Vitality								3 (tie)	
Transportation System Effectiveness	1	1		1 (tie)	2	1	1	3 (tie)	1 (tie)

Preliminary Conclusions from the Open Houses

1. The Format Works. Last time around, the last sets of public workshops were set up as hearings, with people waiting hours to get a few minutes at the microphone, or we had a one hour open house followed by a much longer hearing where speakers were limited to 1-3 minutes each.

This time, the Open House format allowed for a real dialogue between staff and participants that was more useful and satisfying than the previous format. Participants were able to ask questions and, in most cases, get an immediate response. If we could not answer a question, it was written down and staff answered each question within five working days and posted the answer on the Plan Bay Area website.

At many of the display stations, there were questions on the Boards and participants were encouraged to write their comments and suggestions on yellow sticky notes and attach them to the board. By the end of the night, each board had many (often 30-50) thoughtful comments attached.

2. Greater MTC/ABAG Staff Coordination Paid Off in Several Ways. Months of joint meetings between MTC and ABAG staff, together with our consultants, allowed us to anticipate potential

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problems, make adjustments as needed, refine the text and layout for each display station, tailor some boards for each county and thoroughly train staff before each meeting. In contrast to our workshops last time, this coordinated effort has prepared staff well to engage in thoughtful, informative and civil discussions at each of the venues so far.

These Open Houses also created new opportunities for staff from both agencies to work closely together on an important project, across program areas. As the move to our new headquarters approaches, this kind of interagency cooperation is helpful and instructive in preparing our respective staff to work more collaboratively, both physically and programmatically, at our new location.

3. Our Consultants Were a Welcome Addition to Our Team. Having these consultants sitting at the table with us as we designed, planned and executed this set of Open Houses brought a fresh set of experienced eyes to the process. We look forward to working with them again throughout the process.

4. Role of ABAG Executive Board Members and MTC Commissioners. Each of the first eight Open Houses had several ABAG Executive Board members and MTC Commissioners present circulating throughout the room talking to stakeholders, listening to their comments and joining in on conversations at the various display stations. Having elected officials from each county present helped reinforce the message that regional planning is not an attack on local control but a way of providing local jurisdictions with the valuable data, best practices, advocacy and resources they need to successfully address the issues they care most about.

How We Are Responding to Questions and Gathering Comments.

As we explained to participants at each of the Open Houses, staff will respond to questions within five working days. Comments (from comment forms as well as sticky notes from display boards) are being compiled and summarized, and will be posted on the PlanBayArea.org web site. We also told attendees that staff will present a summary of the comments and suggestions received from all of the Open Houses at the June joint meeting of the MTC Planning/ABAG Administrative Committee.

Questions for the Board

Many of you participated in one of the Open Houses. How did you feel they went? How did they compare to similar workshops last time around? What lessons should we take from this first round of public workshops? How can we encourage more productive participation from the community and elected officials in the future rounds of workshops?

Recommended Action

Information

Attachments

Set of follow-up Questions and Answers from Walnut Creek Open House
Samples of display station boards