

Date: February 25, 2013
To: ABAG Administrative Committee
From: Ezra Rapport, Executive Director
Subject: Joint Policy Committee – Recent Coordination Efforts

This memo highlights ABAG’s collaboration with partner regional agencies through the Joint Policy Committee to address climate change and the relationship between air quality and infill development. Discussion and next steps for each effort is provided below.

1. ABAG’s Involvement with Regional Climate Change Strategies

In September 2012, JPC approved a preliminary work plan for ABAG, MTC and BCDC staff to develop a regional sea level rise adaptation strategy. This 10-year work plan includes three work tasks but allows interpretation for specific projects and strategies for collaboration. With the goal of leveraging current and funded work tasks within the agencies, the group has identified preliminary projects for collaboration that fulfill the tasks outlined in the work plan. ABAG’s Earthquake and Hazards Program has been involved in planning conversations for several months with JPC’s Climate Strategist, BCDC, and San Francisco Estuary Partnership around how to coordinate on climate change and climate adaptation projects in the Bay Area.

Staff has developed a preliminary outline for a potential project for collaboration, tentatively titled “*Resilient Shorelines*.” ABAG and BCDC are leading this collaborative planning and implementation process to develop a comprehensive regional shoreline resilience strategy that addresses climate change as well as earthquakes, with the assistance of MTC and BAAQMD. The Resilient Shorelines project will engage counties, cities, and special districts; non-governmental organizations; the business, equity and environmental communities; regional, federal and state agencies; and the public in a collaborative effort to answer two fundamental questions:

- How will sea level rise, storm events, and liquefaction from a major earthquake along the shoreline of the bay affect the future of Bay Area communities, infrastructure, ecosystems and the economy?

- What approaches can we pursue, both locally and regionally, to address these challenges, reduce and manage risks, and build resilience?

This project requires additional development and additional funding. The timeframe for this project is uncertain but staff will be developing the scope of work and pursuing funding over the next several months.

In addition, staff has identified other potential collaboration projects that rely on current funding and can be implemented in the short-term. These include:

- Integrating ABAG's Airport System Recovery Study and Infrastructure Interdependencies Assessment work into the ART Project work in Alameda County, specifically around the Oakland Airport Focus Area
- Implement the tasks in the Strategic Growth Council Grant related to sea level rise and storm events, such as conducting a region-wide assessment of PDAs vulnerable to climate change impacts

Additionally, the regional agencies are currently pursuing multiple projects that intersect under some common themes, such as equity, governance, the economy, and the environment. While the specific hazards of concern may not align, staff is sharing best practices around these common themes to guide individual agency projects. Staff is also sharing best practices for project planning and work process, as these tend to be similar for evaluating and developing strategies for multiple hazards.

2. Proposed Guidance Regarding Air Quality and Infill Development

While there are many benefits to the infill- and transit-oriented development pattern outlined in the Bay Area's draft Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), one challenge that must be addressed is the potential for increased exposure to air pollutants in some of the areas identified for growth. Certain locations in the region, such as near busy freeways, rail yards, ports and refineries, experience localized high levels of air pollutants, such as diesel particulates. Such localized exposure can cause or contribute to health risks to nearby residents.

As part of the ongoing efforts related to the SCS, regional agency staff is working to develop strategies and tools to assist cities and counties in making health-protective land use decisions. The goals are to:

- Support the SCS goal of increasing infill development;
- Avoid locating residential development and other sensitive land uses in areas with high levels of diesel exhaust or other air quality concerns;

- Develop policies and programs for local decision-makers and staff that are understandable, feasible and effective.

Regional agency staff has engaged a small group of local planning directors to discuss policies and programs that could be incorporated into local general plans, specific plans, ordinances, and other local land use planning processes. The goal is to provide land use guidance that is not overly technical that would emphasize implementation of best practices to avoid unhealthy exposures, rather than focusing on analysis of the potential problems.

Staff is exploring a set of tiered land use recommendations. First, within set distances (e.g., 500 feet) of certain air pollution sources (e.g., high volume freeways, ports, rail yards, etc.), we would recommend implementation of best practices to minimize exposure. Examples include high efficiency filters in HVAC systems, tree planting, site design and building design, etc. Within the set distances, we would recommend implementation of best practices for all new residential development and other land uses that would be used by people particularly susceptible to the effects of air pollution (e.g., children, seniors, etc.). Second, we would identify any areas within these set distances where emissions and exposures are particularly high, which would require further analysis and, possibly, additional mitigation. Air District staff would provide data and assist with these local air quality assessments as needed.

The local planning directors with whom staff has discussed this have supported this conceptual approach. Regional agency staff will discuss this approach with additional local planning officials and other stakeholders, such as developers, environmental and community advocates, and public health officials. The work product will consist of a set of Air Quality and Infill Development Guidelines that could inform, and be implemented through, various regional and local programs, including:

- Policy discussion and recommendations at the regional level appropriate for inclusion in the SCS;
- Local air quality analysis in the SCS DEIR for transit priority project areas;
- Land use guidance and recommended mitigation measures for local plans and programs;
- Criteria for PDA Planning Grants and One Bay Area Grants to require local implementation of such guidance and mitigations.