

Plan BayArea

TO: MTC Planning Committee, ABAG Administrative Committee

DATE: April 5, 2013

FR: Deputy Executive Director, Policy, MTC
Executive Director, ABAG

RE: Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR)

MTC and ABAG released the Draft Plan Bay Area Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) on April 2, 2013 for public review and comment. An Executive Summary of the DEIR is attached for your information. The full document is available on the www.onebayarea.org website. At your April 12 meeting, staff will present the key elements of the DEIR for your information. Deliberation by the Committees on the DEIR will begin following the public comment period which ends May 16, 2013.

In compliance with CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines, the environmental assessment of Plan Bay Area ("Plan") is designed to (1) analyze the potential environmental effects of the adoption and implementation of the proposed Plan; (2) inform decision makers, responsible and trustee agencies, and members of the public as to the range of environmental impacts of the proposed Plan; and (3) recommend a set of feasible measures to mitigate any significant adverse impacts. Finally, the DEIR analyzes a range of reasonable alternatives to the Plan. As the joint lead agencies, MTC and ABAG will consider the EIR analysis prior to taking final action on the Plan.

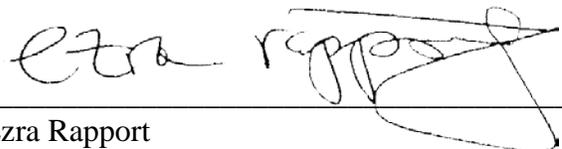
Per CEQA requirements the comment period for the DEIR is structured to gather input. Deliberation and decision making on the final EIR by ABAG and MTC will commence following the close of the public comment period. All comments received and responses to comments will be entered into the record for the final EIR. The MTC Commission and ABAG Executive Board are scheduled to adopt the Final EIR in July along with final adoption of Plan Bay Area.

Oral comments on the DEIR can be made at both the Plan Bay Area Public Hearings described under agenda item 5a and the EIR Public Hearings listed below. Comments may also be submitted online at www.OneBayArea.org; emailed to info@OneBayArea.org, or mailed to MTC-ABAG Plan Bay Area Public Comment, 101 8th Street, Oakland, CA 94607.

Date	Location
Tuesday, April 16, 10 a.m.	San Rafael, Embassy Suites
Tuesday, April 16, 7 p.m.	Oakland (Joseph P. Bort MetroCenter)
Wednesday, April 17, 1 p.m.	San Jose (Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, San Jose State)



Ann Flemer



Ezra Rapport

Draft
Plan Bay Area

April 2013

Strategy for a
Sustainable
Region



Association of
Bay Area
Governments



Metropolitan
Transportation
Commission

Environmental Impact Report
Plan Bay Area
Draft

State Clearinghouse No. 2012062029

PLAN BAY AREA

DRAFT

ENVIRONMENTAL

IMPACT REPORT

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE No. 2012062029

Prepared for

Metropolitan Transportation Commission and
Association of Bay Area Governments

by

DYETT & BHATIA
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In association with

Environmental Science Associates and AECOM

April 2013

Executive Summary

This program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared on behalf of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This EIR analyzes the potential significant impacts of the adoption and implementation of the proposed Plan Bay Area (proposed Plan), which is the update to the 2009 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and the new Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) for the San Francisco Bay Area.

MTC, ABAG, and Plan Bay Area

MTC is the transportation planning, coordinating, and financing agency for the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area (which includes Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, and Sonoma Counties). Created by the State Legislature in 1970, MTC functions as both the regional transportation planning agency (RTPA)—a state designation—and for federal purposes, as the region’s metropolitan planning organization (MPO).

As required by State legislation (Government Code Section 65080 et seq.) and by federal regulation (Title 23 USC Section 134), MTC is responsible for preparing the RTP for the San Francisco Bay Area Region. An RTP is a long-range plan that identifies the strategies and investments to maintain, manage, and improve the region’s ground transportation network. In 2009, MTC adopted its most recent RTP, known as the Transportation 2035 Plan for the San Francisco Bay Area. Development and environmental analysis of regional airport and seaport plans occur in separate processes.

ABAG is a joint powers agency formed in 1961 pursuant to California Government Code §§ 6500, et seq., and is the council of governments (COG) for the San Francisco Bay Area. ABAG conducts regional population and employment projections and the regional housing needs allocation (RHNA) processes (Government Code Section 65584 et seq.). Plan Bay Area is a joint effort led by MTC and ABAG and completed in partnership with the Bay Area’s other two regional government agencies, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD), and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC). It meets the requirements of the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008, Senate Bill 375 (SB 375; Steinberg, 2008), which requires California’s 18 metropolitan planning organizations to develop an SCS as a new element of their federally mandated RTP. The SCS demonstrates how the region will meet its greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets established by the California Air Resources Board (ARB) through integrated land use, housing and transportation planning, a planning effort requiring the authority and powers vested in both MTC and ABAG.

Plan Bay Area, which covers the period through 2040, is the first Bay Area RTP that is subject to the requirements of SB 375. SB 375 requires that the SCS be integrated into the MPO’s RTP and once

adopted will be reviewed by ARB to determine whether it would, if implemented, achieve the GHG emission reduction target for its region. If the combination of measures in the SCS will not meet the region's target, the MPO must then prepare an alternative planning strategy (APS) that will do so.

Plan Bay Area is the region's first integrated long-range land use and transportation plan. Plan Bay Area calls for focused housing and job growth around high-quality transit corridors, particularly within areas identified by local jurisdictions as Priority Development Areas (PDAs). This land use strategy is intended to enhance mobility and economic growth by linking housing/jobs with transit, thus offering a more efficient land use pattern around transit and a greater return on existing and planned transit investments. The proposed Plan specifies the strategies and investments to maintain, manage, and improve the region's transportation network – which includes bicycle and pedestrian facilities, local streets and roads, public transit systems, and highways. The Plan proposes a set of transportation projects and programs that will be implemented with reasonably anticipated revenue available for the planning period. The proposed Plan must be updated every four years, ensuring a constantly evolving plan through regular updates throughout the planning period.

Introduction to the EIR

PURPOSE

This environmental assessment of the proposed Plan Bay Area—which may also be referred to as the “proposed Plan” throughout this document—has been prepared in compliance with CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines. It is designed to:

- Analyze the potential environmental effects of the adoption and implementation of the proposed Plan;
- Inform decision-makers, responsible and trustee agencies, and members of the public as to the range of the environmental impacts of the proposed Plan;
- Recommend a set of feasible measures to mitigate any significant adverse impacts; and
- Analyze a range of reasonable alternatives to the proposed Plan.

The EIR process also provides an opportunity to identify environmental benefits of the proposed Plan that might balance some potentially significant adverse environmental impacts. The final EIR will include a Mitigation Monitoring Program that identifies who will be responsible for implementing the measures.

As the joint lead agencies for preparing this EIR, MTC and ABAG will rely on the EIR analysis of potential environmental effects in their review of the proposed Plan prior to taking action on Plan Bay Area.

SCOPE

This is a program EIR, defined in Section 15168 of the CEQA Guidelines as: “[An EIR addressing a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related either: (1) Geographically; (2) As logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions; (3) In connection with the issuance of rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program; or (4) As

individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental impacts which can be mitigated in similar ways.”

Program EIRs can be used as the basic, general environmental assessment for an overall program of projects developed over a multi- year planning horizon. A program EIR has several advantages. For example, it provides a basic reference document to avoid unnecessary repetition of facts or analysis in subsequent project-specific assessments. It also allows the lead agency to consider the broad, regional impacts of a program of actions before its adoption and eliminates redundant or contradictory approaches to the consideration of regional and cumulative impacts.

As a programmatic document, this EIR presents a region-wide assessment of the potential impacts of the proposed Plan Bay Area. It focuses on the entire set of projects and programs contained in the proposed Plan. Individual transportation and development project impacts are not addressed in detail, although the impacts of some possible projects are discussed as appropriate; rather the focus of this EIR is to address the impacts of a program of projects, which, individually or in the aggregate, may be regionally significant. However, it does not evaluate subcomponents of the proposed Plan nor does it assess project-specific impacts of individual projects. For example, the general physical impacts of major regional transportation expansion projects are addressed, while potential impacts on specific wetlands or a specific species habitat by an individual interchange reconstruction project is not discussed, unless information currently exists or it can be surmised that the effect would be large or otherwise regionally significant. This approach does not relieve local jurisdictions of the responsibility for evaluating project-specific, locally significant impacts. All impacts of individual projects will be evaluated in future environmental review, as relevant, by the appropriate implementing agency as required under CEQA and/or NEPA prior to each project being considered for approval, as applicable.

This EIR evaluates potentially significant environmental impacts, and cumulative impacts, and includes mitigation measures to offset potentially significant effects. This EIR provides the basis for subsequent tiered CEQA documents for project-specific or site-specific environmental reviews that will be conducted by implementing agencies as land use and transportation projects in the proposed Plan are more clearly defined and more detailed studies prepared. Specific analysis of localized impacts in the vicinity of individual projects is not included in this program level EIR.

EIR Organization

The EIR is organized into four parts, outlined below. This Executive Summary outlines the proposed Plan and alternatives and includes a review of the potentially significant adverse regional environmental impacts of the proposed Plan Bay Area and the measures recommended to mitigate those impacts. The executive summary also indicates whether or not those measures mitigate the significant impacts to a less than significant level. The executive summary also identifies the environmentally superior alternative among the alternatives analyzed.

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Part One includes two chapters. Chapter 1.1 describes the relationship between the proposed Plan Bay Area and the EIR, the organization of the EIR, and the basic legal requirements of a program level EIR. It discusses the level of analysis and the alternatives considered as well as how this EIR is related to other

environmental documents and the EIR's intended uses. Chapter 1.2 introduces the purpose and objectives of the proposed Plan Bay Area and summarizes specific information to describe the proposed Plan and complete the EIR analysis. This includes a description of the existing regional setting, an outline of the Bay Area's projected population and employment growth rates and proposed development patterns through the 2040 planning horizon year, and all proposed transportation projects and programs. State and federal planning regulations guiding the development of the RTP and SCS are also described.

PART TWO: SETTING, IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Part Two describes the existing physical and regulatory settings for each of the environmental issue areas analyzed in the EIR, the potential impacts of the proposed Plan on these environmental issue areas, and measures to mitigate the potential impacts identified. Each issue area is analyzed in a separate chapter. Each chapter is organized as follows:

- Physical Setting;
- Regulatory Setting;
- Impact Significance Criteria;
- Method of Analysis;
- Summary of Impacts; and
- Impacts and Mitigation Measures.

PART THREE: ALTERNATIVES AND CEQA REQUIRED CONCLUSIONS

Part Three includes a description of the alternatives to the proposed Plan and an assessment of their potential to achieve the objectives of the proposed Plan while reducing potentially significant adverse regional environmental impacts. Part Three also includes a comparison summary table of regional environmental impacts associated with the alternatives. As required by CEQA, an environmentally superior alternative is identified. Finally, Part Three includes an assessment of the impacts of the proposed Plan and alternatives in several subject areas required by CEQA, including:

- Significant irreversible environmental changes;
- Significant unavoidable impacts;
- Growth-inducing impacts;
- Cumulative impacts; and
- Impacts found to be not significant.

PART FOUR: BIBLIOGRAPHY AND APPENDICES

Part Four includes a bibliography and the EIR appendices. Appendix A includes the Notice of Preparation (NOP) of this EIR and Appendix B provides reference to the comments received on the NOP and at the scoping meetings (a full set of comments can be found on the project website, www.onebayarea.org). Appendix C includes detailed lists of the transportation projects included in the proposed Plan and the alternatives studied in the EIR. Appendix D summarizes scoping comments received on the alternatives. Appendix E outlines the Air Quality analysis methodology and mitigation

measure effectiveness. Appendices F through I include detailed supporting data on impact analyses for geology, water, biology and hazards, respectively.

Plan Bay Area Regional Setting

The Bay Area region consists of nine counties: Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, and Sonoma. In a ranking of Combined Statistical Areas (CSAs), the San José-San Francisco-Oakland CSA population was the sixth largest in the nation in 2010, behind New York-Newark-Bridgeport, Los Angeles-Long Beach-Riverside, Chicago-Naperville-Michigan City, Washington-Baltimore-Northern Virginia, and Boston-Worcester-Manchester CSAs.¹ In 2010, the San Francisco Bay Area population was nearly 7.2 million according to the 2010 Census. According MTC, as of 2010 only about 18 percent of the region's approximately 4.4 million acres of land has been developed. The Bay Area transportation network includes interstate and state freeways, county expressways, local streets and roads, bike paths, sidewalks, and a wide assortment of transit technologies (heavy rail, light rail, intercity rail, buses, trolleys and ferries).

Plan Bay Area Overview

The proposed Plan Bay Area meets the requirements of SB 375 by developing an integrated transportation and land use plan and attains the per-capita GHG emission reduction targets of -7 percent by year 2020 and -15 percent by year 2035 from 2005 levels. Under the proposed Plan, emission reductions continue on a downward trajectory through 2050. The proposed Plan reinforces land use and transportation integration per SB 375 and presents a vision of what the Bay Area's land use patterns and transportation networks might look like in 2040. The adopted goals of the proposed Plan are:

- Climate Protection
- Adequate Housing
- Healthy and Safe Communities
- Open Space and Agricultural Preservation
- Equitable Access
- Economic Vitality
- Transportation System Effectiveness

The Plan objectives are reflected in the following performance targets that measure the region's progress towards meeting these goals and are consistent with the requirements of SB 375:

- Reduce per-capita CO₂ emissions from cars and light-duty trucks by 15 percent.

¹ Census 2010. A Combined Statistical Area is a census defined metropolitan region that consists of two or more adjacent Core Based Statistical Areas (CBSAs) that have substantial employment interchange. The CBSAs that combine to create a CSA retain separate identities within the larger CSA.

- House 100 percent of the region’s projected 25-year growth by income level without displacing current low-income residents.

These goals and performance targets are more fully explored in Chapter 1.2. An alternative that performs substantially worse than the proposed Plan with respect to meeting the plan goals and these performance targets would not achieve even the basic objectives of the proposed Plan.

FORECASTED GROWTH

Looking ahead to 2040, the horizon year for the proposed Plan, it is forecast by ABAG that the Bay Area’s population will grow another 30 percent from the 2010 level (over 2.1 million more residents) and employment will increase by 33 percent (over 1.1 million additional jobs). To house the future population, it is estimated that 660,000 new housing units would be built in the same timeframe. Forecasted growth from 2010 through 2040 is shown in **Table ES-1**.

TABLE ES-1: TOTAL PROJECTED GROWTH FOR THE BAY AREA, 2010-2040

	2010	2040	Growth 2010 - 2040	% Change	Annual Growth Rate
Population	7,151,000	9,299,000	2,148,000	30%	0.9%
Households	2,608,000	3,308,000	700,000	27%	0.8%
Housing Units	2,786,000	3,446,000	660,000	24%	0.7%
Jobs	3,385,000	4,505,000	1,120,000	33%	1.0%

Source: Association of Bay Area Governments, Plan Bay Area Jobs-Housing Connection Strategy, revised May 16, 2012.

LAND USE STRATEGY

To plan for this future growth, the proposed Plan calls for focused housing and job growth around high-quality transit corridors, particularly within areas identified by local jurisdictions as Priority Development Areas (PDAs). Opportunities for focused growth development in Transit Priority Project (TPP)-eligible areas, as defined by SB 375 in Public Resources Code section 21155, which often overlap with PDAs, are also encouraged and facilitated by the proposed Plan. This land use strategy enhances mobility and economic growth by linking housing/jobs with transit and existing transportation infrastructure, thus offering a more efficient land use pattern around transit and a greater return on existing and planned transit investments. Beyond the emphasis on transit-oriented development, the proposed Plan’s land use strategy broadly calls for new housing and jobs in locations that expand existing communities and build off of all existing transportation investments.

TRANSPORTATION

The proposed Plan includes a financially constrained transportation investment plan as required by State and federal planning regulations. It includes transportation projects and programs that would be funded through existing and future revenues that are projected to be reasonably available to the region over the timeframe covered by the proposed Plan. A total of \$289 billion in revenues is available for the financially constrained Plan Bay Area. That is, the proposed Plan and alternatives evaluated in the EIR are financially constrained to be within the \$289 billion envelope.

A more detailed description of the proposed Plan is included in *Chapter 1.2: Overview of the Proposed Plan Bay Area*.

Alternatives

A full description of the alternatives analyzed in this EIR and the alternative selection process is provided in Part 3. The alternatives are as follows:

ALTERNATIVE 1: NO PROJECT

The No Project alternative consists of two elements: (a) the existing 2010 land uses plus continuation of existing land use policy as defined in adopted general plans, zoning ordinances, etc. from all jurisdictions in the region and (b) the existing 2010 transportation network plus highway, transit, local roadway, bicycle and pedestrian projects that have either already received full funding or are scheduled for full funding and received environmental clearance by May 1, 2011.

ALTERNATIVE 2: PROPOSED PLAN

Alternative 2 is the proposed Plan analyzed in this EIR. This alternative assumes a land use development pattern that concentrates future household and job growth into Priority Development Areas (PDAs) identified by local jurisdictions. It pairs this land development pattern with MTC's Preferred Transportation Investment Strategy, which dedicates nearly 90 percent of future revenues to operating and maintaining the existing road and transit system. A more detailed overview of the proposed Plan is in Chapter 1.2.

ALTERNATIVE 3: TRANSIT PRIORITY FOCUS

This alternative includes the potential for more efficient land uses in Transit Priority Project (TPP) areas, as defined by Senate Bill 375 (PRC section 21155), and would be developed at higher densities than existing conditions to support high quality transit. The transportation investment strategy in this alternative tests a slightly reduced express lane network that focuses on HOV lane conversions and gap closures, as well as increased funding for the implementation of recommendations from the Comprehensive Operations Analysis of BART and AC Transit above what is included in the Preferred Transportation Investment Strategy. This alternative also includes a Regional Development Fee based on development in areas that generate high levels of vehicle miles travelled, and a higher peak period toll on the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge.

ALTERNATIVE 4: ENHANCED NETWORK OF COMMUNITIES

This alternative seeks to provide sufficient housing for all people employed in the Bay Area with no commuters from other regions and allows for more dispersed growth patterns than the proposed Plan, although development is still generally focused around PDAs. The transportation investment strategy is consistent with the Preferred Transportation Investment Strategy, also used in the proposed Plan, and includes a higher peak period toll on the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge.

ALTERNATIVE 5: ENVIRONMENT, EQUITY AND JOBS

This alternative seeks to maximize affordable housing in opportunity areas in both urban and suburban areas through incentives and housing subsidies. The suburban growth is supported by increased transit service to historically disadvantaged communities and a reduced roadway network. This alternative includes imposing a Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) tax and a higher peak period toll on the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge to fund transit operations.

Key EIR assumptions

The following key assumptions were used in the impact analysis:

- The base year or existing conditions for the land use and transportation impact analysis is 2010, as this year provides the most recent best data available for land use, transportation, and demographics. The only exception appears in *Chapter 2.5: Greenhouse Gases and Climate Change*, which uses a 2005 baseline per the CARB target setting process to determine impacts under Criterion 1 related to achieving the requirements of SB 375.
- The total amount of growth projected for the Bay Area through 2040 is based on ABAG's Plan Bay Area Forecast of Jobs, Population and Housing (the forecasts used to develop the Jobs-Housing Connection) that is available for review on the project website (<http://www.onebayarea.org>); this amount of growth is assumed in the proposed Plan, which identifies a land use pattern to accommodate the projected growth.
- This analysis does not consider phasing of improvements or interim stages of the proposed Plan Bay Area between 2010 and 2040, as the purpose of the analysis is to evaluate the Plan as a whole. The one exception to this approach appears in *Chapter 2.5: Greenhouse Gases and Climate Change*, which includes an examination of impacts in 2020 and 2035 as compared to a 2005 baseline per the ARB target setting process to determine impacts relating to achieving the statutory requirements of Senate Bill 375.
- As a program-level EIR, individual project impacts are not addressed; rather, this analysis focuses on the aggregate impacts of the proposed Plan that may be regionally significant.

CUMULATIVE IMPACT ASSUMPTIONS

Section 15130 of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR evaluate potential environmental impacts that are individually limited but cumulatively significant. CEQA defines cumulative impacts as “two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts” (CEQA Guidelines § 15355). “‘Cumulatively considerable’ means that the incremental effects of an individual project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects” (CEQA Guidelines § 15065(a)(3)). This means that cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant projects taking place over a period of time.

Plan Bay Area, which includes region-wide transportation improvements and land use development patterns in the Bay Area to accommodate projected regional growth through 2040, is a cumulative plan by definition. As such, the environmental analysis included in this EIR throughout Part Two is a

cumulative analysis compliant with the requirements of CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines. Furthermore, this EIR contains analysis of cumulative regional impacts, as differentiated from more generalized localized impacts for every identified impact area.

Plan Impacts

The analysis emphasizes the impacts of the proposed Plan Bay Area as a complete program, rather than as detailed analysis of the individual transportation improvements and land use strategy included in the proposed Plan. Individual improvements and development projects must still independently comply with the requirements of CEQA. As required by CEQA, this EIR identifies three types of impacts:

- Short-term impacts;
- Long-term impacts; and
- Cumulative impacts.

The EIR addresses regional impacts as well as generalized localized impacts. It also, to the extent feasible, distinguishes between impacts caused by transportation improvements and impacts related to proposed land use patterns.

Table ES-2 summarizes the impact conclusions and recommended mitigation measures identified in this EIR. The impacts are organized by environmental impact issue area in the order in which they appear in Part Two.

Environmentally Superior Alternative

CEQA Guidelines require each EIR to identify the environmentally superior alternative among the alternatives analyzed. If the No Project alternative is identified as the environmentally superior alternative, then the EIR must identify another alternative from among the alternatives analyzed. According to the analysis in Chapter 3.1, Alternative 5 would result in the lowest level of environmental impacts, but only marginally lower, as compared to all alternatives (including the proposed Plan), and therefore is identified as the environmentally superior alternative. Alternative 3 results in similar impacts to the proposed Plan, and Alternative 4 and the No Project alternative have mixed environmental outcomes. Overall, variations in environmental impacts among alternatives are minor. This determination does not factor in other benefits of the proposed Plan outside of environmental effects. More specifically:

- In **Transportation**, Alternative 3 has the least environmental impact as it features shorter commute travel times (three percent shorter than the proposed Plan) and a lesser amount of congested VMT (14 percent fewer VMT at LOS F as compared to the proposed Plan) and the least potential for transit vehicle crowding (30 percent utilization of public transit systems, the same as the No Project alternative, and three percent less than the proposed Plan). These results are due to shifting regional growth to the Transit Priority Project eligible areas, with the greatest emphasis on growth in the urban core close to high-frequency transit.

- In **Air Quality**, Alternative 5 has the least environmental impact as it results in the lowest criteria pollutant emissions (1.7 percent fewer criteria pollutant emissions as compared to the proposed Plan) as well as lowest TAC emissions of all of the alternatives (1.9 percent fewer TAC emissions as compared to the proposed Plan). This is a result of placing a greater emphasis than the other alternatives on aligning compact land use development with transit service and increasing transit capacity.
- In **Energy**, Alternative 4 would result in the lowest per capita energy use (3.3 percent less than the proposed Plan and 2.7 percent less than Alternative 5), and would therefore have the least environmental impact.
- In **Greenhouse Gas Emissions**, the proposed Plan and Alternative 5 perform equally in regard to meeting SB 375 emission reduction targets in 2035 (both achieving a 16.4 percent reduction, one percent better than Alternative 3, 1.6 percent better than Alternative 4, and 9.6 percent better than the No Project alternative). Alternative 5 performs slightly better in terms of total emissions reductions (achieving a 17 percent reduction from 2010 to 2040, one percent better than Alternative 3 and two percent better than the proposed Plan).
- In **Sea Level Rise**, the No Project alternative includes the fewest transportation projects exposed to midcentury sea level rise inundation (the No Project alternative includes 15 projects, Alternative 5 includes 21 projects, and the proposed Plan, Alternative 3, and Alternative 4 include 32 projects exposed to midcentury sea level rise inundation). Alternative 5 includes the fewest residents (12 percent less than the proposed Plan), and new residential development (10 percent less than under the proposed Plan) exposed to midcentury sea level rise inundation because it distributes growth to areas farther from the Bay.
- In **Land Use (conversion of agricultural and forest land)**, Alternative 4 results in the fewest acres of important agricultural and open space land converted to urbanized use, as well as the fewest acres of forest and timberland converted to urbanized use.
- In **Noise** the No Project alternative has the fewest environmental impacts since it results in the lowest number of roadway miles exposed to noise levels at or above 66 dBA. It also includes the fewest transit extension projects, resulting in the smallest increase in transit noise and vibration compared to other alternatives.
- In **Biological Resources, Water Resources, Cultural Resources, and Visual Resources**, Alternative 5 combines compact development with low transportation infrastructure development, resulting in fewer physical impacts tied to these resources. It is noted that in terms of land use development-related impacts alone (excluding transportation projects), the proposed Plan is the most compact and would have the least impact on these resources.
- In **Geology, Public Utilities, Public Services, and Hazardous Materials**, Alternatives 1, 2 (proposed Plan), 3 and 5 are comparable and have fewer impacts than Alternative 4. Alternative 4 includes the most growth, thereby inherently exposing the most people to geologic and hazards risks, and resulting in the greatest impacts on existing public service, recreation, and utility systems. One exception to this is in regard to wastewater treatment, where Alternative 4 has the least impact because of limited growth in San Francisco, which has likely inadequate wastewater treatment capacity under all other alternatives.
- For **Historic Resources and Land Use (community disruption or displacement, alteration and separation)**, all alternatives perform similarly. Since all alternatives include growth in

urbanized areas where historic resources are likely to exist, impacts on historic resources would be similar. For land use, impacts related to community disruption or displacement and alteration and separation would be highly localized and similar across the alternatives.

While Alternative 5 is the environmentally preferred alternative due to its overall GHG emissions reductions and estimated reduction in criteria and TAC emissions, the proposed Plan does include some benefits over Alternative 5. For instance, the proposed Plan results in the lowest VMT per capita (the same as Alternative 4), with one percent fewer daily VMT per capita than Alternative 5. Alternative 5 also exhibits congested VMT levels 18 percent higher in the AM peak, seven percent higher in the PM peak, and 11 percent higher over the course of a typical weekday as compared to the proposed Plan. Finally, the proposed Plan results in fewer acres of agricultural and open space conversion as compared to Alternative 5 (though more than Alternative 4), and the fewest acres of important farmland (excluding grazing land) of all alternatives.

Another important consideration is that the proposed Plan was developed through extensive coordination with local jurisdictions. Alternative 5 assumes residential growth at levels that some local jurisdictions may be unlikely to implement, since it includes growth in areas that local jurisdictions have not planned for or do not currently anticipate.

In addition, there are some important unanswered questions about the feasibility of Alternative 5 that the ABAG Board and the MTC Commissioners will address during deliberations on this EIR. Specifically, implementation of the VMT tax, which is a key component of Alternative 5, may prove to be infeasible because it would require legislative approval and, in light of Proposition 26 (the “Stop Hidden Taxes” initiative), may require approval by a two-thirds supermajority vote of the Legislature. While there is currently a large majority of Democrats in the Legislature, and authorizing legislation may therefore be easier to achieve at this time, the difficulty of predicting whether new legislation will actually be enacted may make Alternative 5 infeasible.

Policy makers will be required to judge the relative importance of the various issue areas in making their final decision.

Areas of Known Controversy

Section 15123 of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR identify areas of controversy which are known to the Lead Agency, including issues raised by other agencies and the public. Areas of controversy associated with the proposed Plan are made known through comments received during the Notice of Preparation (NOP) process, as well as input solicited during public scoping meetings and an understanding of the community issues in the study area. Some areas of known controversy, including issues raised by some members of the community, related to the proposed Plan Bay Area and EIR include:

- Whether the proposed Plan’s assumptions of future land use development patterns are feasible given that MTC and ABAG cannot regulate land uses at a regional or local level.
- Concerns about whether the degree and scale of growth proposed within existing communities would alter their appearance, quality of life, and affordability, and whether it would conflict with the existing plans and regulations of the local jurisdiction.

- Determining whether the proposed Plan's emphasis on maintaining and sustaining the existing regional transportation system will be adequate to serve the Bay Area's anticipated population and employment growth.
- Assessing whether the proposed transportation investment strategy can reduce GHG emissions and exposure to air pollutants even as the region's population and economic base continue to grow.
- Determining whether and where sea level rise impacts will occur and how best to minimize those impacts.
- Concerns that increased concentrations of population in focused areas would overwhelm existing public services and utilities, such as parks, police and fire services, water supply, etc.

This EIR acknowledges these known controversies as reported during the NOP scoping period and ongoing agency consultation. To the extent these areas of controversy relate to environmental impacts, they are analyzed at the regional level in Part Two of this EIR.

Issues to be Resolved

CEQA Guidelines section 15123(b)(3) requires that an EIR contain a discussion of issues to be resolved and whether or how to mitigate significant effects. Issues to be resolved include:

- How to address potential impacts from the proposed land development pattern that must be mitigated by the local land use authority, since neither MTC nor ABAG have jurisdiction over land use regulations.
- The degree to which MTC and ABAG can provide adequate incentives for implementation of changes to land use policy.
- How best to require mitigations that can be enacted by project sponsors and/or implementing agencies in a manner to ensure CEQA streamlining for qualifying projects, per SB 375, can occur.

When adopting the proposed Plan Bay Area, the MTC Commission and ABAG Board must decide whether specific overriding economic, legal, social, technological or other benefits of the project outweigh the significant environmental impacts that cannot be feasibly avoided or substantially reduced through implementation of feasible mitigation or alternatives. If so, they would adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations.