

April 15, 2016

**From:** ABAG Regional Planning and Research Staff

**To:** Joint ABAG Administrative and MTC Planning Committee

**Subject:** Integrated Regional Planning Vision

The potential reorganization of ABAG and MTC into a single agency represents an extraordinary opportunity to create an innovative regional planning function that combines the best of ABAG and MTC expertise to deliver improved planning, policy, and funding support to the Bay Area. Planning and research staff believe that retaining our ability to provide responsive, locally-tailored services that improve the lives of current and future Bay Area residents requires maintaining the integrity of our *function* as a department, regardless of the specific *organizational structure* of the regional agency for which we work. In this spirit, we have identified five key elements to the success of an integrated department for your consideration:

- 1. Collaborative, holistic, and integrated department structure and culture.** ABAG Planning and Research Department staff works on a diverse set of interrelated tasks, many in concert with partner regional agencies including MTC. The work meets regulatory requirements, like RHNA and SB375, while also addressing multi-jurisdiction issues that benefit from a regional approach, like housing affordability, equity, economic development, sustainability, and resilience. Staff is responsive, nimble, and effective because of our ability to work both **horizontally** (across staff working on different tasks) **and vertically** (among staff, management and leadership). A combined department can build upon this approach.
- 2. All ABAG Planning and Research Department staff joins a single integrated department,** able to sustain successful cross-discipline collaboration and enhance collaboration with our MTC colleagues.
- 3. ABAG programs responsive to needs identified by Bay Area communities continue and are enriched** by greater involvement of MTC staff when appropriate. This includes Resilience, the East Bay Corridors Initiative, Housing, Economic Development, Bay Trail, Water Trail, and Placemaking.
- 4. Sustain trust and accountability to local governments** by maintaining a direct link between regional land use and housing staff and the board of a combined COG/MPO or to the ABAG Executive Board prior to a full agency merger. Local staff and elected official feedback make it clear that a scenario in which ABAG retains its statutory land use and housing responsibilities without a direct line to land use and housing staff is likely to increase concerns about accountability and diminish trust in the regional agencies.
- 5. In concert with any organizational changes, engage in a deliberate process for integrating existing ABAG and MTC planning staff** facilitated by a neutral party that addresses: a) the function, management, mission, and vision of the department; b) internal and external relationship maintenance; c) decision-making structures; and d) conflict resolution.

Sincerely,

ABAG Planning and Research Staff

CC: MTC Commissioners and ABAG Executive Board Members; Management Partners