

Marin Coalition Speech
Pat Eklund, Mayor Pro Tem City of Novato and ABAG Executive Board Member
September 2, 2015

Thank you all for being here. It is great to see so many people interested in ABAG and MTC.

ABAG's history set the course for where we are today. In fact, the 101 cities and 9 counties formed ABAG to retain local control of planning for our future. In 1957, the Bay Area Council representing major employers resurrected a 1946 proposal for a regional agency to acquire, manage and operate all airports, seaports and bridges. This alarmed local governments so much so, that in 1960 locally elected officials with help from the League of CA Cities, called for a voluntary metropolitan council of cities and counties. By summer, executed joint powers agreements were adopted; and, in February 1961, the first ABAG General Assembly met forming the first council of local governments in California. The first Executive Director was a former San Rafael City Manager, Wilber E. Smith. ABAG's primary goals were then and continue today to be protecting local control, planning for the future and promoting cooperation on area wide issues.

In its first decade, ABAG approved an open space plan, an ocean coastline plan, an Airport systems plan and the first Regional Plan: 1970-1990, emphasizing city-centered growth. With the enactment of Clean Water Act in 1972, ABAG, who had been designated by the state and federal governments as the official comprehensive planning agency, became responsible for developing water quality plans pursuant to Section 208. That was my first contact with ABAG, since my job at the US EPA in the late 1970's was to evaluate and approve those plans. In 1980, when the State passed AB 2853 requiring the development of the RHNA, it came to the Council of Governments, ABAG. Since the beginning, ABAG has studied regional issues: housing, transportation, economic development, education, and the environment.

Recognizing that local budgets were tightening, ABAG developed cost-saving services for its members. In 1983, ABAG launched its first financial services program. Today, ABAG provides other cost saving services: liability and property insurance; and buying natural gas for municipal governments; Green Business Programs; energy audits and providing demographic information and data analysis. ABAG administers the SF Bay Estuarine Partnership, Bay Trail, Water Trail; and, Resilience Planning. All of these programs rely on ABAG's land use planners.

3 years ago, I had the honor of being elected to the Executive Board by the 11 Marin cities. After serving on ABAG's Regional Planning Committee, I knew the issues and wanted all Marin cities/towns to be more engaged and kept informed of the issues. So, we formed a Marin ABAG delegate ad hoc group composed of the designated ABAG delegates in each city/town. Our Marin ABAG delegate group was the first in the Bay Area – and, now other counties are following suit.

Plan Bay Area, 2013 was brutal. So as not to repeat the mistakes made in 2013, the Marin ABAG delegates asked ABAG and MTC to develop a more collaborative, transparent process to get meaningful input from the public and elected officials on Plan Bay Area 2017. We supported MCLs and many other requests that the Plan include water availability, sea level

rise and realistic population, housing and job projections. We asked that the Plan **emphasize** that each county and city/town has its own character and needs and that the recommendations are at the discretion of the local jurisdictions.

In 2014, work started on the Plan Bay Area 2017. This year, open houses were held in each County; and, in Marin we also had a great ABAG/MTC workshop in Novato where we discussed the timeline, the performance targets and population, jobs and housing needs projections. We got down into the details and I heard from many of you that you learned a lot.

Then, two separate events in July suggest that may be there a rough ride ahead. First, at the July 10th joint meeting of the ABAG Administrative and MTC Planning Committees, staff presented different recommendations on performance target -- #2. ABAG staff proposed to keep it as is: "House 100% of the Region's projected growth by income level without displacing current low income residents". MTC proposed two changes. First, MTC wanted to remove 'without displacing current low-income residents" and add a performance target that reads: "Increase the share of affordable housing in PDA's by a ____ percentage". Those are very different concepts. MTC also proposed to add on performance target #2 "with NO INCREASE in the in-commuters over the Plan baseline year" primarily due to a settlement agreement with the Building Industry Association.

ABAG projected that 100,000 people were commuting from outside the Region into the Bay Area to work in 2010. Today, ABAG is projecting a 30% increase in the 'in-commute' especially given the high housing costs. This change could mean an additional 30,000 housing units would be added to the housing needs allocation.

Second. At the July 16th Executive Board meeting, we learned for the first time that the MTC Commissioners voted on June 24, 2015, to only fund ABAG's planning and research activities through December 2015. Scott Haggerty, Alameda County and Julie Pierce, Clayton voted No and Mark Luce, Napa County absent. All other MTC Commissioners voted to limit ABAG's planning funding to 6 months. Many on the Executive Board were shocked since the jointly adopted 2012 agreement clearly outlines the annual funding MTC provides to ABAG through 2021. MTC's reasoning: they wanted to explore moving the land use planning functions from ABAG to MTC and look for other efficiencies to reduce costs.

The Bay Area is unique where regional land use planning resides at ABAG and regional transportation planning resides with MTC. All other Council of Governments in California includes transportation planning. They do not have a separate transportation agency. Over the last 20 years, there have been several attempts to merge ABAG and MTC, but all failed. The last attempt to merge these agencies triggered the 101 cities to stand their ground to protect local control.

We've been told that MTC's proposal is not a merger, but only taking over the land use planning. If MTC is looking to reduce costs, just moving ABAG's land use planners to MTC doesn't save money. But, as shown in previous studies, if a new Council of Governments was created for land use and transportation planning, eliminating both ABAG and MTC, then, that would have significant cost savings. Regardless, though, to ensure there is an objective

and thoughtful analysis and that all stakeholders are involved in this decision, it will take far more time than allotted by MTC.

Unlike ABAG that was created by local governments, MTC was created in 1970 by the State of California, with support from the Bay Area Council, to coordinate transportation services. MTC is not a council of governments; it is not a service oriented joint powers authority; it was created by and is an arm of the State. The governance structures are completely different. 20% of cities and 167% of the counties serve on ABAG's Executive Board. 9% of the cities and 90% of the counties serve on the MTC Commission.

The clock is ticking. We have less than 2 years before Plan Bay Area 2017 finalized. The timeline is short and, in my opinion, both ABAB and MTC need to do more to involve and get feedback from the public and elected officials.

I am all for finding efficiencies and opportunities for collaboration. ABAG and MTC have done that for the past 50+ years. But, this approach is really about removing ABAG's power and ability to conduct and make decisions about land use planning and diminishes local control.

At the July Board meeting, I suggested that ABAG call for a General Assembly of our cities and counties – cities want to be at the table – currently very few are. I also suggested that ABAG seek independent planning funds from the State, now while they are still in session. For MTC to unilaterally decide not to fund ABAG is not good government. I agree with the Sierra Club to “abandon this disruptive effort and provide adequate funding to ABAG for the customary period”.

If I had a choice of who does our RHNA and land use planning .. Hands down, I would choose ABAG.