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September 21, 2015

Supervisor Dave Cortese  
Metropolitan Transportation Commission  
101 Eighth Street  
Oakland, CA 94607

**RE: MTC-ABAG Merger Conversations**

Dear Chair Cortese and MTC Commissioners:

Greenbelt Alliance is the San Francisco Bay Area's leading organization working to protect natural and agricultural landscapes from development and help our cities and towns grow in smart ways to create great neighborhoods for everyone across the income spectrum. We are the champions of the places that make the Bay Area special, with more than 10,000 supporters and a 57-year history of local and regional success.

**We write to share our perspectives on the current discussions regarding the merger of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG).**

The issues of land use, land conservation, transportation, and social equity are inextricably linked. The Bay Area needs a highly functional regional governance structure that effectively integrates these multiple issues to ensure the best outcomes for the region.

For years, Greenbelt Alliance has believed that the region would benefit from better integration of MTC and ABAG—including a full merger of the two agencies—to more effectively address these multiple issues. We strongly appreciate the recent attention to the topic of regional agency integration and believe it provides a unique opportunity to advance this long-sought goal.

With so much at stake, it's essential that it's done right.

We are concerned that the current proposal to simply move the ABAG planning department under MTC's authority would, especially given the short timeline that has been proposed, be unlikely to achieve the outcome of integration across issues that many of us desire. In fact, this approach could, intentionally or not, overly emphasize transportation issues and de-prioritize housing, conservation, and land-use issues as the ABAG staff and functions that have historically focused on land use, conservation, and housing would be within an institution that, by its very name, is transportation-oriented.

We strongly encourage a defined, transparent public process to achieve a highly functional regional governance structure that effectively integrates the multiple issues outlined above. This process should include a clear timeline with milestones and benchmarks to achieve the best outcome in an efficient manner. We encourage MTC and ABAG to jointly produce a plan for this goal-driven public process as soon as is feasible. To support these activities, MTC should commit to a full year of funding for ABAG's planning budget allocation.

We would welcome the opportunity to contribute to such an endeavor and we suspect other stakeholders would as well. Working together, we can harness the best ideas from across our nine counties to design a workable regional structure that creates a better Bay Area for all.

Sincerely,



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CC:  
Julie Pierce, ABAG Chair  
Ezra Rapport, ABAG Executive Director  
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Steve Heminger, MTC Executive Director  
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