



## **Housing Leadership Council of San Mateo County**

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Metropolitan Transportation Commission  
Association of Bay Area Governments  
101 Eighth Street  
Oakland, California 94607

### **Re: MTC/ABAG Relationship**

Dear MTC Commissioners and ABAG Board Members:

We hope discussions around a potential merger will be undertaken in a spirit of goodwill and cooperation and always maintain in mind the greater good of our region and the fundamental mission of the agencies. We value highly the professional staff at both agencies and depend upon their ability to function in a cooperative and effective way and produce high quality work. Our regional agencies are in charge of momentous decisions and critical activities that profoundly shape the social, economic, and environmental well-being of the residents of the Bay Area. We need a stable and sustainable COG/MPO structure for the long-term that can adapt to new challenges and deliver results.

While we agree that a single regional planning department could have great potential and achieve greater efficiencies and even closer collaboration and cohesiveness, we want to make sure that the absolutely essential land use, affordable housing and anti-displacement work currently being conducted by ABAG planning staff continues to have the prominence and priority that it deserves and the resources and staffing it demands in any scenario that is ultimately adopted. This should not be seen as an opportunity to demote or marginalize these duties and obligations.

Regardless of which approach is ultimately pursued, we must also have an efficient and fully functioning staff of professional planners committed to achieving the goals of Plan Bay Area to fully integrate transportation and land use planning in order to inform major investment decisions and to ensure a diverse and equitable region with an outstanding quality of life and full socio-economic and racial integration of our neighborhoods and communities.

This is a major undertaking that is being proposed and, if you choose to move forward, you should take the time to do it right. In fact, since ABAG's planning staff represents one-third of ABAG's budget and employees, this would also be the time to consider moving forward in

phases toward a full merger of our COG and MPO as the other regions in California have. It doesn't make much fiscal or policy sense to have a depleted ABAG with fewer employees and duties continue as a separate entity without resources and the necessary staff to even seek its own grant funding.

If you do decide to move forward with a merger, the MTC contribution to ABAG's FY15-16 budget should be approved for an entire year at a minimum to ensure there are sufficient time and resources to manage the transition and to create some stability and assurances for current employees. This will allow you to retain your highly-qualified and experienced staff.

Finally, in order to meet the Plan Bay Area 2017 deadline, we recommend utilizing the Joint MTC Planning Committee/ABAG Administrative Committee as the designated body for final review and adoption.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important subject.

Sincerely,



Evelyn Stivers  
Interim Executive Director  
Housing Leadership Council of San Mateo County