

CITY OF CONCORD
1950 Parkside Drive, MS/01
Concord, California 94519-2578
FAX: (925) 798-0636

CITY COUNCIL
Timothy S. Grayson, Mayor
Laura M. Hoffmeister, Vice Mayor
Edi E. Birsan
Daniel C. Helix
Ronald E. Leone

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
Telephone: (925) 671-3158



Thomas J. Wentling, City Treasurer
Valerie J. Barone, City Manager

September 22, 2015

Dave Cortese, Chair
MTC Commissioners
Steve Heminger, Executive Director
Metropolitan Transportation Commission
101 Eighth Street
Oakland, California 94607

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OCT 01 2015
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

Subject: Proposal to Discontinue Funding of ABAG Land Use and Planning Functions

Dear Chair Cortese, Commissioners and Executive Director Heminger:

As a member of the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), the City of Concord greatly values the roles of both the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and ABAG, and appreciates their ongoing collaboration in regional planning efforts such as the Sustainable Communities Strategy. Concord has benefitted from MTC's past planning and capital grants that are helping to implement our City's Downtown Specific Plan.

While the merging of MTC and ABAG has long been discussed and could ultimately have a very positive outcome, the City is concerned by the recent proposal by MTC to discontinue funding ABAG's land use and planning functions by subsuming ABAG land use planning staff into MTC, essentially resulting in a forced merger. This would likely result in many staff leaving, as well as many of ABAG's State mandated functions being lost or minimized, while it is precisely the balance of transportation needs and goals with planned jobs and housing growth that has brought about a stronger Plan Bay Area.

Such an important restructuring to form one Regional Governing Board from two distinct agencies will require thoughtful and deliberate planning and outreach, in order to engage all city and county stakeholders that will be affected by it. In its September 10th, 2015, white paper, ABAG outlines four proposed scenarios, from keeping both organizations distinct, with better collaboration, to second, the proposed MTC assimilation of ABAG planning functions, to third, a full merger with a new Governing Board, or fourth, a Transitional Merger which would make ABAG and MTC divisions under one Governing Board and Executive Director. This last option would centralize the budget and overhead services and strategic planning in a new organization, while keeping some functions distinct and intact.

September 22, 2015
Dave Cortese, Chair
Steve Heminger, Executive Director
Page 2

To allow for the possibility of a collegial merger process, the City of Concord urges MTC to secure the stability of both planning departments to proceed with Plan Bay Area by extending ABAG funding for the final 6 months of FY 2015-2016, and to establish a subcommittee to produce an Action Plan to conduct an evaluation of the various merger scenarios. We urge both ABAG and MTC to take time to properly engage all stakeholders in an open and inclusive process.

Sincerely,

The City of Concord

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura Hoffmeister". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Laura Hoffmeister, Vice Mayor
for Mayor Timothy S. Grayson

cc: ✓ ABAG, Executive Director
Concord City Council
Valerie Barone, City Manager