



September 22, 2015

Dave Cortese, Chair, and Members, Metropolitan Transportation Commission
Julie Pierce, President, and Members, Association of Bay Area Governments
101 Eighth Street
Oakland, CA 94607

Dear MTC Chair Cortese, ABAG President Pierce, and Commissioners/Members,

RE: Discussions on MTC/ABAG Consolidation

I am writing to express TransForm's perspective and provide comments on the question of the ABAG/MTC relationship and MTC's proposal to establish a single planning department between the two agencies. These comments are based in part by our conversations with a number of key stakeholders, including ABAG and MTC staff and board members, local elected officials as well as non-profit and private leaders.

Since 1997, TransForm has worked to create world-class public transportation and walkable communities in the Bay Area and beyond. We have been deeply involved in numerous state, regional, county, and local transportation decisions, including the past six regional transportation plans (RTPs). We frequently help shape funding decisions and groundbreaking policies to support public transportation, smart growth, affordable housing, and bicycle/pedestrian safety.

TransForm strongly supports moving towards a unified regional planning department. Better integrated regional planning efforts can lead to improved quality of life for all Bay Area residents and protect our most vulnerable neighbors. The last Plan Bay Area saw increased collaboration between the agencies, so we can only anticipate that future rounds of Plan Bay Area will require even closer coordination of agency efforts.

TransForm encourages MTC and ABAG to consider the following recommendations as the agencies work out the details towards better regional planning:

- I. Integrating any of the functions of MTC and ABAG should come as a result of a clear process laid out to determine the best organizational structure for regional planning, one that considers multiple alternatives and examines best practices/models for regional governance.**

We fully support the move towards a more integrated, single regional planning department that will make for a smoother regional planning process, help reduce redundancies between the organizations, and encourage the most efficient use of public resources. The region should come up with a structure for regional planning that exemplifies the importance of making interconnected decisions on transportation, housing, land use, open space, resiliency and equity. However, the ABAG budget decision should not be the determining factor for how the region plans for better integration. While staffing and budgetary conversations have percolated up as the trigger to consolidate agency functions, they cannot define the process towards better integration in regional planning. We urge MTC to provide additional funding to ABAG as needed (perhaps even beyond 12 months) while this crucial transition takes place.

The process should determine a new mission statement, identify clear bodies of work, a new staffing structure, and a new governance structure with proportional representation.

2. The consolidated planning department should build on the strengths and expertise of each existing agency.

For example, consolidation of the respective planning departments should result in future iterations of Plan Bay Area that successively demonstrate stronger ability to tackle the complex and important issues of housing production, affordability, and displacement as they relate to and are influenced by transportation investments and programming.

3. Plan Bay Area 2040 should be the final RTP/SCS with joint reporting and a separate MTC and ABAG staff and approval processes.

MTC and ABAG should make a commitment to the swift streamlining of the Plan Bay Area process between the two organizations so that future Plan Bay Areas are produced by a one staff and one board approving a final plan.

4. A Taskforce, Working Group or Committee should be assembled with the specific task to inform MTC and ABAG on how to evolve towards fully integrated regional planning that moves us to plan for equity in transportation, housing, land use, open space and resiliency.

Countless studies have explored the pros and cons of various metropolitan planning organization structures. We support the idea of retaining an outside consultant team to advise and support a merger process **BUT** only as long as the consultant gleans from the wealth of information we already have, **AND** there is a process/body set up for key regional stakeholders to provide input including community leaders and local academic experts.

We look forward to working with you to help encourage the best possible organizational structure that leads to the most resilient outcomes for Bay Area residents, particularly the most vulnerable among us.

Thank you for your continued commitment to creating a better Bay Area.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Clarrissa", followed by a horizontal line and a period.

Clarrissa Cabansagan
Community Planner

cc: Steve Heminger
Ezra Rapport
Ken Kirkey
Miriam Chion