



Service Matters

Regional Housing Needs Program Funding In Jeopardy

The state mandated Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) process has reached a critical juncture. It is in jeopardy because of recent decisions by the Commission on State Mandates, that cities, counties, and councils of governments (COGs) are not entitled to state reimbursement for their costs associated with the RHNA process and preparing housing elements, as required by law.

On March 30, 2005, the Commission on State Mandates reversed a 20-year practice of reimbursing COGs for RHNA, a practice carried out since the landmark 1981 test case first submitted by ABAG. In fact, the Commission decided that housing element law does not impose a reimbursable mandate on cities and counties. The decision was based on the premise that no reimbursement was necessary, because cities and counties could themselves now impose fees on developers to pay for the cost of complying with the law, according to SB 1102 legislation passed last session.

During subsequent appeals, ABAG, Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), CALCOG, other COGs and local governments reiterated, to no avail, that it was unsound public policy for the Commission to base its decision on an untested ability to levy fees. Expecting COGs to charge local jurisdictions that are facing equal budgetary challenges and constraints in their housing planning efforts and projects was presented as unrealistic, counterproductive, and had potential to raise housing costs.

The timing of the Commission's decision severely impacts ABAG and Bay Area cities, towns, and counties because under existing statutes the next RHNA cycle (approximately 2 1/2 years) is slated to begin June 30, 2005, with State delivery of a Bay Area regional housing need figure. As a result, ABAG has been working with the state Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) and has requested an extension. HCD has indicated favorably that an extension is likely

and the RHNA process could potentially begin June 2005 with local housing element revisions due December 31, 2008. This extension would allow the time needed for ABAG to work with local governments to allocate the regional need numbers and for local governments to update their housing elements.

A close look at ABAG's past performance of the RHNA process highlights the dilemma created by the decision. As the Bay Area's council of governments and state-designated regional planning agency, ABAG has successfully managed and completed three RHNA revision processes in partnership with the state. For the third revision, completed in 2001, ABAG even received multiple awards and commendations, while other areas struggled statewide just to complete the process. In fact, state certification of local Housing Elements for ABAG members currently exceeds the statewide average. Notwithstanding previous success, the challenge is that, without reimbursement from the state, ABAG and other COGs are simply not in a financial position to perform the next RHNA process, much less begin the cycle.

On positive note, to help meet the immediate funding dilemma, recent budget proposals recommended by Secretary Sunne Mc Peak of the California Business, Housing, and Transportation Agency include a "Blueprint for Housing" line item that would set aside one million dollars for COGs in line to start the process which includes ABAG and SCAG. Stay tuned for more developments about the status of the RHNA process as ABAG explores other administrative, legislative, and judicial options.

The ABAG PLAN "Be Sewer Smart" public education campaign conducted a half-day first time Sewer Summit on June 15th for 70 representatives of agencies, private sector organizations, and businesses to address sewer backup prevention challenges. In its second year of helping homeowners and their communities prevent costly sewer backups, the Sewer Smart Public Education Campaign recently won the Public Risk Management Association Achievement Award in the Pool Category at the national PRIMA June annual meeting.



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Director of Training Center and Online Services Retires Terry Bursztynsky Honored for 28 Years of Service

Director of Training Center and Online Services, Terry Bursztynsky will retire after 28 years of ABAG service. Bursztynsky has served in many capacities since he started in 1977, and is recognized for his contributions to information technology (IT), training, conferences, and environmental services.

Bursztynsky's leadership was instrumental in the development of ABAG Training Center's Hazardous Materials Training in 1984. He pioneered the West Coast's premier Hazardous Materials Conference, HAZMACON, which attracted up to 10,000 attendees annually for close to 15 years. As technology advanced, he was behind the launch of the training center's Online Hazmat School in 1999 as a spin-off of the existing hazardous materials training, adjusting the program to fully utilize cost-effective online capabilities.

In January 1994, Bursztynsky helped establish and develop abagOnline ("access to bay area governments Online"), the country's first Internet Website for a council of governments. This award-winning website has become



Welcome to HAZMACON

a portal to ABAG planning projects, government services, and the latest regional research that approximately 1,000,000 people visit each month. Under Bursztynsky's leadership abagOnline offers a cost-effective hosting service for agencies and jurisdictions. He led the way for upgrading the agency's client/server network to a Windows-based environment in the early '90s, and most recently developed a

comprehensive three-year agency IT plan. Bursztynsky's contributions in environmental services include industrial and solid waste projects and research on erosion control techniques specific to construction sites, to name a

few. He co-authored and directed the update of *Erosion and Sediment Control Handbook* published by McGraw-Hill in 1986, and revised in 1996 as the *Manual of Standards for Erosion and Sediment Control Measures*.

All of ABAG wishes Bursztynsky the best in his retirement and the new adventures beckoning.

The Importance of ABAG Member Delegates

Delegates and alternates appointed to ABAG's General Assembly play a key role in establishing regional policies and incentives. To be appointed a delegate and alternate to ABAG's General Assembly carries distinction and regional responsibility with the expectation that delegates will help integrate local needs into regional planning priorities. This determination of policy includes adoption of ABAG's annual budget and work program. The executive arm of the General Assembly is the 38-member ABAG Executive Board which carries out policies established by the General Assembly, makes operating decisions, receives and reviews policy decisions and recommendations for the General Assembly and from ABAG committees. This is done under the leadership of ABAG's President who is currently Scott Haggerty, Alameda County Supervisor.

Regional Voice of Delegates

As part of their responsibility, ABAG General Assembly delegates and alternates are asked to attend two General Assemblies (GA) each year in April and October. **This**

fall, on October 27th at the Oakland Marriott City Center, the General Assembly will provide an opportunity for delegates and other attendees to address issues related to housing affordability. Over the past five years, GAs have focused on water and land use, regional governance models, housing and economic prosperity, homeland security and natural disasters, energy and public policy, education, biotechnology boom, lessons from Loma Prieta, sustainable developments, smart growth, and the most recent spring GA on the growth of proposed Bay Area Casino Development. These conferences explore topical regional issues, with Bay Area local electeds, staff, and business and community leaders joining issue experts to examine how issues impact the Bay Area. The GAs are a critical part of delegates' efforts to link local planning with regional policies and initiatives.

For more information on ABAG General Assembly members, a roster of the Executive Board, standing committees, specific issue-based committees, and task forces, go to ABAG's website at www.abag.ca.gov.

World Environment Day 2005 Sets Accords for “Green Cities”

The Bay Area and ABAG took center stage during World Environment Day 2005 in San Francisco, a historic conference dedicated to adopting sound environmental practices for urban centers and raising public awareness of the need to preserve and enhance the environment. The first annual World Environment Day was held in 1972 and this year marks the first time the conference was held in the United States. The theme of World Environment Day 2005 was “green cities” because cities cover 2% of the world’s surface, accommodate 50% of the world’s population, and consume 75% of its resources. The San Francisco Bay Area provided an excellent backdrop for the events and theme because of the environmental efforts pioneered in the region by the cities. ABAG’s Bay Trail, Green Business, and San Francisco Estuary programs were showcased and set an example for meeting the challenge of environmental sustainability in urban areas. The Bay Trail Project participated in the “World Waterfront Symposium” and led a waterfront tour for mayors and the general public.

A total of 68 mayors worldwide with 17 from the Bay Area attended the conference to forge a path towards a sustainable urban future. **(Bay Area mayors in attendance included those from Berkeley, Dublin, Emeryville, Hayward, Hillsborough, Larkspur, Monte**

Sereno, Novato, Oakland, Palo Alto, Piedmont, Richmond, San Bruno, San Ramon, San Francisco, Santa Rosa and Sausalito.)

A milestone was achieved at the conference when 50 mayors signed a set of 21 accords which called for adding renewable energy sources; reducing greenhouse gas emissions 25% by 2030; achieving zero waste to landfills by 2040; implementing “user-friendly”



composting programs; and mandating a “green building” rating system, among other measures. “With more people living in urban areas than ever before, it’s the mayors that disproportionately are going to influence environmental causes around the world,” said San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom. ABAG is working with mayors and others in local governments to help address these issues.

Bay Trail Grant Program

As the Bay Trail Project, administered by ABAG, wraps up a five year grant program, important achievements are being recognized. Over \$6.2 million from Proposition 12 has been allocated to local jurisdictions to complete planning studies and trail construction projects. As of June 30th, 40 grants have been completed, resulting in more than 14 additional miles of trail construction, new shoreline destination areas, interpretive signs, trail amenities, as well as detailed planning analysis for over 65 miles. The Bay Trail Gap Analysis has also been completed which provides detailed information about the costs and timeframe needed to complete the 500-mile trail. To continue this momentum a new \$3.8 million grant round from Proposition 40 will be launched soon. To date, approximately 240 miles of the alignment—over half the Bay Trail’s ultimate length—have been completed. When completed, the Bay Trail will connect the shoreline of all nine Bay Area counties, link 47 cities, and cross the major toll bridges in the region.

See the Bay Trail website for more information about the new grant program: <http://baytrail.abag.ca.gov/> or (510) 464-7900.



The City of San Mateo celebrated the completion of the first phase of Shoreline Park improvements, partially funded by a \$500,000 Bay Trail-Coastal Conservancy Grant. Project includes a new bicycle-pedestrian bridge, improved trail, outdoor classrooms, windsurfing and kayak access, and other park improvements.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

July 2005

July 15 10:00 a.m.
ABAG/BAAQMD/MTC Joint Policy Committee
MetroCenter, Auditorium

July 18 10:30 a.m.
ABAG-CALFED Task Force and Bay Area Water Forum
Elihu M. Harris State Building, 1515 Clay Street, 2nd Floor, Room 11

July 21 3:30 p.m.
Legislation & Governmental Organization Committee Meeting
MetroCenter, ABAG Room 106B

July 21 5:00 p.m.
Finance and Personnel Committee Meeting
MetroCenter, ABAG Room 106B

July 21 7:00 p.m.
Executive Board Meeting
MetroCenter, Auditorium

August 2005

August 3 1:00 p.m.
Regional Planning Committee Meeting
MetroCenter, Auditorium

August 17 12 noon
ABAG POWER Executive Committee Meeting
MetroCenter, ABAG Room 106B

See What is New on
ABAG's Website
www.abag.ca.gov

INDIAN GAMING resource page featuring links to several Memorandums of Agreement between local governments and Indian tribes, as well as state tribal compacts.

OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES

Local Government Energy Partnership; Estuary; the CALFED Task Force/Water Forum; and the Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (<http://quake.abag.ca.gov/>)

Notable Numbers

Cost of Housing

#1
California has the highest median home value and the highest-priced homes, closely followed by Hawaii and Massachusetts.

\$509,230
Is considered a median priced home in California, an increase of 12.5% since last year.

97.5%
Of 396 of 406 cities and communities statewide showed an increase in respective median home prices from a year ago.

19.6%
Jump occurred in the median price of Bay Area single-family houses since last year, raising it to \$622,000.

17%
Of California households can afford to buy a median-priced home, as compared to 20% in 2004.

34%
Of households in the High Desert region of Southern California could afford to buy a median priced home, ranking it the most affordable region in the state.

8%
In the Northern Wine Country could buy a home, ranking it the least affordable region in the state.

Sources: CA Association of Realtors, Data Quick Information Systems, American Community Service

Save The Date Fall General Assembly

Thursday
October 27, 2005

Marriott
City Center East Hall
Oakland

Mark Your Calendars

Scott Haggerty
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Alameda County Supervisor

David Cortese
ABAG Vice President,
Councilmember, City of San Jose

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