



June 9, 2011

MTC Planning Committee
ABAG Administrative Committee
101 Eighth Street
Oakland, California 94607

Re: Alternative Scenarios for Plan Bay Area

Dear MTC Commissioners and ABAG Administrative Committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on alternative scenario definitions for Plan Bay Area, the region's Sustainable Communities Strategy and Regional Transportation Plan. As you consider alternative land-use patterns for Plan Bay Area, Greenbelt Alliance has several suggestions:

Maximize housing production to ensure a strong regional economy

One big question on everyone's mind is how the next generation of growth will impact the region's ability to create and sustain good jobs. CEOs of Bay Area companies identified "High housing costs for employees" as the number one business challenge every year for the past seven years.¹ Increasing the supply of homes we can all afford will help the Bay Area retain its regional competitive edge for attracting and retaining job-producing businesses.

Every Plan Bay Area scenario should strive to maximize our ability to produce the homes we need to ensure a strong economy.

Use all the policy tools in the toolbox to achieve our housing goals

Clearly there are challenges to meeting our region's full housing need: costs of infrastructure and municipal services, costs of below-market-rate housing, neighborhood opposition, and market realities. However, we should plan to use the full suite of policy tools at our disposal to overcome those challenges and increase the number of homes which are realistic and feasible. Specifically, the Plan Bay Area scenarios should:

¹ CEO Business Climate Surveys 2005-2011, Silicon Valley Leadership Group - <http://svlg.org/press/library>

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1. Identify the constraints to meeting our housing goals
2. Quantify the gap between where we are and where we want to be (e.g. funding shortfalls)
3. Identify the full suite of policy tools we have to bridge that gap at the local and regional levels– including options for infrastructure financing (e.g. regional block grants, local assessment districts) and affordable housing funding (e.g. regional Transit-Oriented Affordable Housing program, local inclusionary housing policies), and
4. Quantify how far we can get towards closing that gap by fully implementing all the policy options, and how much that can increase housing production at all income levels.

The Plan Bay Area scenarios should plan for no fewer than the number of homes that are possible to build through full and robust implementation of all housing policy options.

Ensure the land-use pattern achieves social equity goals

The region’s adopted targets for Plan Bay Area include goals around the economy, environment, and social equity. To date, much of the discussion around the SCS land-use pattern has focused on sustainability. The Housing Methodology Committee has made significant progress in discussing a housing distribution process for the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) that achieves goals around both sustainability and social equity, including providing households at all income levels with access to jobs, transit options, quality schools and other amenities.

One or more Plan Bay Area scenarios should include a housing distribution pattern based on the methodology developed by the Housing Methodology Committee.

We support the concept of an “Equity, Environment and Jobs” scenario, with a housing distribution as described above, that also includes transportation components such as prioritizing local transit operations and maintenance.

Thank you again for your leadership on these issues.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Reyes

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