

MEMO

Date: June 6, 2012

To: ABAG Regional Planning Committee (RPC)

From: Kenneth Kirkey, ABAG Planning Director

Re: Rural Community Investment Areas and Employment Investment Areas

Summary

Staff is presenting a proposal for approval of Rural Community Investment Areas and Employment Investment Areas described in attached documents as four-year pilot programs.

Background

At its March 7, 2012 meeting, the RPC deferred action on three new types of proposed Priority Development Areas (PDA)—Rural Town Centers, Rural Corridors, and Employment Centers—until its June 6, 2012 meeting. The Committee requested further study and clarification of each place type. RPC members and stakeholders expressed concern that adding these place types could compromise the overall objectives of the PDA program, reduce the impact of funding dedicated to PDAs, promote development inconsistent with the regional growth strategy, and potentially reduce the equity of funding to jurisdictions across the region.

At its March 15, 2012 meeting, the ABAG Executive Board deferred action on these place types except for approving Downtown Dixon (previously proposed as a Rural Town Center) and Benicia Northern Gateway (previously proposed as an Employment Center) as PDAs.

During the past two months, ABAG staff has conducted additional analysis of the rural and employment place types to ensure that they help achieve the overall objectives of the adopted Jobs-Housing Connection Strategy and support development in the region's other PDAs. Following review of comments from RPC members, consultation with jurisdictions and stakeholders, and additional analysis, staff created two proposed place types—Rural Community Investment Areas and Employment Investment Areas—to replace Rural Town Center, Rural Corridors and Employment Center PDAs, and to better align with the Jobs-Housing Connection Scenario and help ensure that investments in these places are of an appropriate scale and cost.

Employment Investment Areas and Rural Community Investment Areas will play a unique and important role in implementing the Jobs-Housing Connection Strategy. Both types were conceived in consultation with local jurisdictions as opportunities to meet the specific needs of different parts of the region while supporting a larger regional growth pattern that helps meet our GHG reduction targets and achieve other environmental, economic, and equity goals. In Sonoma County, for example, Rural Community Investment Areas provide an opportunity to focus the limited growth anticipated in rural parts of the county in walkable places within the urban footprint and reduce development pressure on the agricultural and conservation lands critical to the economic well-being of these communities and to the food supply of the region. In Santa Clara County, investments in employment centers can improve affordable transit and pedestrian access to places that provide a wealth of job opportunities but are currently poorly linked to communities with limited affordable transportation options. The county PDA growth strategies that will be completed during the next year will help ensure that both Rural and Employment Investment Areas play an appropriate role in supporting a sustainable growth pattern that prioritizes the development of housing in transit-accessible locations.

To provide an opportunity for review and adjustment, Employment and Rural Investment Areas are proposed as four-year pilot programs that will be evaluated as part of the planning process for the next SCS.

Attached to this memo are descriptions and criteria for Employment and Rural Investment Areas and letters of support from jurisdictions for adoption of individual Employment and Rural Investment Areas. Also attached are letters from Sonoma County and the City of Napa requesting a shift in place type. Sonoma County is requesting that its Airport/Larkfield PDA be divided into an Employment Investment Area and a Rural Investment Area, while Napa is requesting that its proposed Downtown Napa and Soscol Corridor (previously proposed as a Rural Town Center and Rural Corridor) be combined and adopted as a Transit Town Center PDA. Staff support adoption of these these designations based upon jurisdictions' visions for these areas and refinements to the place types described in this memo and its attachments.

Requested Action

- Recommend adoption of Rural Community Investment Areas and Employment Investment Areas as pilot programs by the Executive Board at its July 2012 meeting, contingent upon adjustments (if needed) by jurisdictions according to the proposed criteria
- Recommend designation of Benicia Northern Gateway and Downtown Dixon, previously adopted as PDAs, as an Employment Investment Area and a Rural Community Investment Area, respectively, by the Executive Board at its July Meeting
- Recommend adoption of Downtown Napa and the Soscol Corridor, previously proposed as a Rural Town Center and Rural Corridor, as a Transit Town Center PDA by the Executive Board at its July 2012 meeting

Next Steps

- Adoption of Rural Community Investment Areas and Employment Areas by the Executive Board at its July Meeting
- Designation of Benicia Northern Gateway as an Employment Investment Area and Downtown Dixon as a Rural Community Investment Area by the Executive Board at its July Meeting
- Adoption of Downtown Napa and the Soscol Corridor as a Transit Town Center by the Executive Board at its July Meeting

Attachments

- Proposed Rural Community Investment Area Guidelines
- Proposed Employment Investment Area Guidelines
- Letter from Sonoma County requesting the division of its previously proposed Airport/Larkfield PDA into an Employment Investment Area (Airport Employment Area) and a Rural Investment Area (Larkfield)
- Letter from City of Napa proposing adoption of Downtown Napa and Soscol Corridor as a Transit Town Center
- Letters from jurisdictions supporting adoption of individual areas as Rural Investment Areas

In addition to these attachments, original applications from jurisdictions for Employment Center and Rural PDAs are available in the electronic version of this agenda packet, and two hard copies will be available (for review only) at the RPC and Executive Board meetings and in the ABAG offices in advance of these meetings.