

# getting beyond general plans

san francisco bay area . third scenario . projections to 2035

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**On February 9, 2009, local government representatives and other interested parties were asked to discuss a series of growth-related policy issues, as they relate to the San Francisco Bay Area. Session One focused on Getting Beyond General Plans. Below are the questions posed by Christy Riviere, ABAG Principal Planner, and the responses from participants.**

## **How does the region continue a productive dialogue about growth?**

- o More transparency from ABAG/MTC about projections and forecasts, how they are used as assumptions and base data for other plans and environmental documents. A discussion ensued of adding additional weight to 'policy-based' forecasting than previous projections, reflected in the 'scattered success' scenario. It was noted that the final forecast has to be realistic according to local plans, as a federal requirement.
- o Need to get to the next level of local-level outreach, i.e. homebuilders associations. If ABAG doesn't have the capacity for this level of outreach, then an ABAG toolkit for city outreach to the public on these issues would be useful. It could outline the issues, present talking points, frame the discussion so that there is a clear regional message on why we are doing this.
- o ABAG needs to start communication and education for the general public on SB375 and the changes that are coming. There is not much awareness among the general public on this.
- o ABAG should utilize existing county-wide forums (i.e. recent San Mateo County series)

## **How best to frame the land use dialogue? Is the climate change context most compelling?**

- o Sustainability is a better frame because it balances many issues – equity, environment, economy.
- o Property values and energy costs are current concerns and relate to the land use issues (transportation costs)
- o Access to nature in relation to infill development over "green-field" development.
- o Quality of life issues are a good frame to relate planning concerns to day-to-day individual considerations; i.e. congestion.
- o 2035 is too distant. It would be better to get people thinking about the near future, like 5-7 years from now. Housing element updates are a good opportunity for this.
- o It would be useful for ABAG to partner at local housing workshops to work to get the zoning in place that implements the housing allocations.
- o Housing methodology dialogue was important for acceptance of the last housing allocation. This group should transition into the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) preparation as the SCS will serve that function in the future.

- Question on timing – when does this start? Now... but more concretely, California Air Resources Board targets will be set in Sept. of 2010.
- SCS process should allow local governments to interact with regional agencies in a joint/coordinated fashion. It is difficult for local governments to keep track of all the independent efforts and planning processes of the various regional and state agencies that establish targets and other policies that affect local planning.

**Is asking local governments to reconsider adopted plans, in the interest of VMT reductions a non-starter? Embarking on SB 475 implementation, how do we get local government plans to mesh with the sustainable communities strategy?**

- Include local decision makers in this effort and share in the formation of policy.
- Be aware of the fiscal impact on jurisdictions. Changing the growth that cities are planning for could put them out of business fiscally.
- Need to clarify how the housing allocation in projections relates with priority development areas. These areas were established in conjunction with ABAG to take on new growth, even in some of the outer reaches of the Bay Area. The Projections allocations may run counter to this effort.
- Will the new Projections affect resource allocation to areas planned for infill growth (Priority Development Areas)?
- Rather than push for new general plans, ABAG could develop sample sustainability elements that could be incorporated into general plans by amendment.
- Help explain the modeling used in this process.

