

what if?

san francisco bay area . alternative growth scenarios . projections to 2035

The production and accumulation of greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide, are changing the Earth's climate. In the Bay Area, 50 percent of our carbon dioxide emissions come from the transportation sector. The vast majority of these carbon emissions come from cars. Most of us live in communities where driving is the only transportation option. What if things were different?

In 25 years, over nine million people will live in the San Francisco Bay Area – two million more than today. Over one-quarter of us will be 65 years old or older. The era of cheap oil will have more than likely come to an end.

To help think about the future of the Bay Area, we have created two alternative development scenarios. In the first scenario, **Scattered Success**, local and regional policy makers have had some success in developing more transportation-efficient projects. Still, thousands of additional acres of low-density, auto-dependent, single-use neighborhoods have been added to our urban-footprint. Transit is still unavailable in many parts of the region and walking remains an unrealistic option in too many places. This means the majority of us continue to drive to our daily destinations. As a result, driving and our transportation-related carbon emissions have gone up.

In the second scenario, **Focused Future**, there has been an incredible amount of region-wide revitalization of our inner cities and new development around our light- and heavy-rail stations, major bus stops and ferry terminals. Transportation services have been extended and improved, and many connections are nearly seamless. Existing, auto-dependent suburbs have been transformed into walkable downtowns and mixed-use neighborhoods, where more housing and businesses have located. Walking, biking and transit use are the norm in many places. As a result, our transportation-related carbon emissions have gone down.

This Fall, join Bay Area regional planners to discuss these alternative scenarios and what they mean for your community. The scenarios are a means for testing a range of development possibilities. In our view, a **Focused Future** offers the best hope toward reducing our reliance on cars and transportation energy, and ultimately our carbon footprint - even if it does not unfold exactly as we have described here. With sufficient capital infrastructure and incentives, good design and community amenities, we can build a transportation-efficient region. We will need large financial investments into our existing urban communities, unwavering commitment and strong leadership to make it happen.

Whatever your role in this, we hope you join us in discussing these scenarios and that they help you to better understand the choices we all face.

Region Aims High

Things do change. We effectively determine the nature of that change. So then, what if we decided that in the future, most Bay Area residents could choose to drive less? What if we determined that our transportation-related carbon emissions should be lower than they are today? What if there was less traffic congestion and more people had access to transit? In our future, what if we could conserve more land for open space and agricultural uses? Some say we would be aiming too high. But what if by aiming high, we could succeed even if we fell short?

Aim for the Targets

Bay Area communities have made substantial progress toward moving away from a “business as usual” development pattern. We have had some success in planning and developing more transportation efficient communities near our BART stations, VTA transit areas, MUNI stops and ferry terminals. The **Scattered Success** scenario largely documents this progress. **Scattered** extends our current level of success twenty-five years out into the future. However, as you read how that future scenario plays out, it will quickly become clear that we need to get **Focused**, and do more.

When and how will we know when we have done enough?

We can only know we have achieved success by setting clear, measurable goals and then working toward those goals. The Bay Area’s regional land use and transportation agencies, the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, have set such goals. We have set provisional long-term targets to reduce region-wide driving, greenhouse gases, to improve air quality, protect our land resources and to promote equity. These targets are mostly based on existing California laws, including Assembly Bill 32, California’s Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006.

Specifically, by 2035 we aim to:

- ⇒ Reduce driving per person by 10 percent below today’s levels.
- ⇒ Reduce traffic congestion, measured by hours of delay, by 20 percent below today’s levels.
- ⇒ Reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 40 percent below 1990 levels.
- ⇒ Reduce PM2.5 (fine dust particles) emissions by 10 percent below today’s levels.
- ⇒ Reduce PM10 (coarser particulate mater) by 45 percent below today’s levels.
- ⇒ Limit greenfield development to 900 acres per year over the next 25 years.
- ⇒ Increase access to jobs and essential services via transit or walking by 20 percent above today’s levels.