

ABAG-MTC TASK FORCE FINAL REPORT

December 19, 2003

BACKGROUND

For many years, the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) have had different ideas about how regional planning should be accomplished in the Bay Area. ABAG has had a long standing policy that the agencies should be merged, while MTC has favored continued independence of the two agencies. While the two have successfully cooperated many times in the past, and share some board members, the controversy continued.

This came to a head in 2002 when Sen. Tom Torlakson, D-Antioch, introduced a bill to merge the two agencies. The bill passed the Senate but died in an Assembly committee, after significant opposition and questions about the specific proposal. Spurred by this legislation, ABAG and MTC agreed to try to resolve their differences by negotiation rather than through the state legislature.

Following a series of correspondence between MTC Chair Steve Kinsey and ABAG President Gwen Regalia, and approvals of both ABAG's and MTC's policy bodies, an ABAG-MTC Task Force was formed to review ways to improve comprehensive regional planning, including possible organizational and structural changes to ABAG and MTC.

The team of John Fregonese and Don Blubaugh were selected to serve as Task Force facilitators. Don Blubaugh retired as City Manager of the City of Walnut Creek. John Fregonese is principle of Fregonese Calthorpe Associates. Don recently managed the "Shaping our Future" Campaign in Contra Costa County, while John was the principle consultant in that effort.

The work plan was based on a series of 6 meetings, beginning with reaching an agreement on the definition of the problem, studying successful regional plans elsewhere in the country, developing a list of potential solutions, working to consensus on those solutions, and developing an agreement for further action. The meetings were well attended, and all members took an active role. The final agreement was supported unanimously by the ABAG-MTC Task Force.

While there remains a difference of opinion on the issue of merger, agreement was developed to put this issue aside for the time being, and develop a better structure to do regional planning together. The solution involves creating a permanent joint committee, similar in structure to the committee that developed the agreement, developing staff support for that committee, and focusing on long and short term goals. While a consensus based merger is not possible in the short term, there was unanimous agreement that the pressing regional issues could not wait, and that this structure could result in substantial real progress in resolving longstanding regional problems.

The following agreement is the basis for moving forward to solving those problems. It is the hope of the committee that while differences remain around the issue of merger, there is work to be done in solving pressing regional issues. Developing a closer, more integrated working relationship may provide new insights for an even more effective structure in the future.

TASK FORCE AGREEMENT

Principles of Consensus

- 1) There needs to be some structural changes in how the two agencies work together – truly effective regional progress depends on a more collaborative effort with the appropriate structure and resources to support it.
- 2) To facilitate progress in regional matters, there should be a newly-created standing Joint Policy Committee from the two agencies with a substantial role.
- 3) There is support for a substantial and effective regional implementation strategy based on information, partnerships, incentives, and disincentives.
- 4) There is agreement on a list of activities that should be undertaken, although the final action list should be a follow on activity formed by the new Joint Policy Committee.

Organizational Structure

A permanent joint policy committee, consisting of representatives of the ABAG and MTC Boards shall be created. The Joint Policy Committee's purpose is to advance integrated regional planning and will have authority to comment on and review any substantial regional plans or strategies that are devised by either agency, and shall

report directly to the board of each agency. The focus of the Committee's efforts will be to periodically update the regional vision and outline implementation strategies for consideration by ABAG and MTC. Countywide agencies made up of city and county representatives as well as other regional agencies should be involved extensively in helping to update the Vision and creating the strategies. The Joint Policy Committee will look at its relationship with the Regional Agency Coordinating Committee and other standing committees of each agency.

The Joint Policy Committee shall have its own dedicated staff resources to implement a work plan of its creation devised to advance integrated regional planning for the Bay Area. The staff team (numbers to be determined based upon an adopted work plan) shall be led by a Planning Manager who shall be retained by the Executive Directors of ABAG and MTC with input provided by the Joint Policy Committee.

Financial Resources:

MTC agrees to provide funding for up to two years for the Planning Manager position though assistance from other agencies will be explored by the Joint Policy Committee as well. It is also agreed that during this time ABAG will provide additional information as to how funding previous allocated by the Commission to ABAG are being spent and the work products created. The first order of business will be to develop a work program and budget for the joint policy committee. Both agencies will contribute to this work program with funds, staff, or both. The exact budget and source of funds will be the subject of a later negotiation and agreement between the agencies.

Plan of Action

The Joint Policy Committee will consider the following:

- To implement the Regional Smart Growth Vision development of a list of (1) incentives, (2) financial strategies, (3) model codes and other strategies and invite and work with local agencies to create and implement them as best management practices.
- Development of a legislative agenda working with other state and regional agencies to further regional planning goals..

- Consider a regional investment strategy and incentives that reinforces the Smart Growth Vision
- Coordinate and evaluate other regional plans dealing with incentives, transportation, land use, housing, jobs, environment, economy and equity with the view of coordinating revisions and updates to coincide with the 2008 RTP.