January 12, 2015

Amy Rein Worth, Chair, Dave Cortese, Vice Chair, and Commissioners
Metropolitan Transportation Commission
101 Eighth Street
Oakland, CA 94607

Re: Public Participation Plan for Plan Bay Area 2017

Dear Chair Worth, Vice Chair Cortese, and Commissioners:

The adoption of a Public Participation Plan is the first in a series of important decisions that MTC and ABAG will make in the process leading to the adoption of the next Plan Bay Area in 2017. We are pleased to provide comments on the draft Participation Plan. We believe our recommendations will help the process yield outcomes that are best for the region's disadvantaged communities *and* for the region as a whole.

As strong supporters of regional planning, we find much to praise both in the last regional planning process and in the draft Participation Plan. First, we applaud <u>improvements to the regional planning process</u> by which Plan Bay Area was developed four years ago, among them:

- The adoption of **strong goals and performance measures** early in the process;
- The convening of a Regional Equity Working Group to guide staff in **analyzing equity issues *throughout* the process**, not just at the very end;
- The analysis in the EIR of the **Equity, Environment and Jobs (EEJ) alternative**; and
- The adoption of **Plan Bay Area (PBA) amendments** reflecting the areas in which that analysis showed the EEJ outperformed the "preferred alternative."

Since adopting PBA, MTC has also taken a more proactive role in guiding the **county transportation agencies**, or CMAs, whose long-range plans are a significant input into the regional plan. This was demonstrated by MTC's adoption of updated countywide transportation plan (CTP) guidelines, which will help the region achieve and exceed PBA goals and performance measures by moving the needle county by county. As we noted in our comments on the 2010 Public Participation Plan (attached), "MTC remains responsible for ensuring the fairness of the planning process, even – and especially – when it delegates authority to others, or adopts decisions made by them." We applaud MTC for stepping actively into the role of guiding the CMAs toward achievement of PBA's goals and performance measures.

Finally, we are pleased with a number of improvements in the draft Participation Plan over the last one, especially:

- The draft Participation Plan **specifies each key decision point** in the process. Consistent with the request in our comments in 2010, it describes the nature and importance of the decision to be made, identifies the decision maker, describes the process that will be used in reaching that decision (including the role that various boards, committees and task

forces will play in that process), and states the anticipated timeframe and sequencing of decisions.

- The draft Plan provides a much clearer **process map** (Appendix A, pp. 3, 30), and its opportunities for input include evening workshops to allow public review on the results of the analysis of the scenario alternatives before "any decisions by ABAG and MTC on a preferred scenario" (Appendix A, pp. 11-12).
- The draft Plan anticipates **integrating equity metrics into the process** of defining and evaluating scenarios (Appendix A, p. 11), something that was lacking in the last process.
- The draft Plan includes programs to "[c]ontract with community-based organizations in low-income and minority communities for targeted outreach" (p. 15) and make "[g]rants to community-based organizations to co-host meetings and remove barriers to participation by offering such assistance as child care or translation services" (p. 17).

These improvements are welcome. At the same time, the draft Participation Plan can and should be improved in important ways. We provide the following recommendations and offer our assistance in addressing some critical gaps:

1. **Start with the Needs:** As in 2010, the draft Participation Plan skips this crucial step. MTC should include an early process for assessing the critical transportation and safety needs of the region as a whole, and of low-income communities and communities of color in particular, and should describe how the critical needs identified will guide later analyses and decision making.
2. **Engage Stakeholders in Scenario *Development,* and Include an Equity Scenario from the Start:**
    a. The draft Participation Plan does not lay out a process for involving the public in the <u>development</u> of scenarios (as opposed to the evaluation of scenarios developed by staff). We have long expressed our desire to be included in that process. In the recent development of the CTP Guidelines, MTC heard and responded to the public's desire to participate in workshops <u>before</u> the draft was "written in stone." The same early engagement is even more crucial here.
    b. A scenario should be developed and analyzed that, like the EEJ, maximizes greenhouse gas reduction by running more frequent local transit service; protecting high-propensity transit riders against displacement; incentivizing increased transit mode share with free passes (especially for youth, persons with disabilities, and seniors); locating more affordable housing near transit, schools and jobs; integrating local transit and safe, active transportation between these essential destinations; investing more in complete streets maintenance and improvement; and ensuring that underserved and disadvantaged communities receive a fair, timely and meaningful share of the benefits of public investment.
3. **Evaluate and Integrate Goals and Performance Measures:** Plan Bay Area's goals and performance measures are strong, and should be strengthened. Since they are the yardstick against which progress will be measured, they should not live in a vacuum during this process:
    a. The goals and performance measures should guide the entire process. For

instance, rather than waiting until the EIR to see how well each scenario meets the performance measures, that analysis should be conducted during the process of scenario development and selection.

b. MTC should report annually on the extent to which progress has been made against PBA's performance measures at both the project and overall plan levels, and the public should be involved in this evaluation process. The "Vital Signs" initiative is a welcome step in that direction, but it must encompass all of PBA's performance measures and equity metrics.

4. **Evaluate Near-Term Equity Impacts:** Instead of analyzing equity impacts using a "colorblind" methodology that speculates about impacts at the distant horizon of the planning process, MTC should build on the approach suggested by HUD for our Regional Prosperity Plan's "Fair Housing and Equity Assessment" by (a) identifying the determinants of current segregation and exclusion by race and income (including gentrification and displacement); (b) adopting action programs to address and eliminate them in the short term (four years); and (c) assessing progress annually.

5. **Add a New Focus on Quality Jobs:** With hundreds of billions of dollars being spent, our new regional plan has the power to help reduce extreme income inequality. It should include a focus on how that public funding can be used in a way that creates, and gives low-income residents access to, good jobs, and should incorporate key findings and strategies identified in the Economic Prosperity Strategy and other outcomes of the HUD-funded Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant.

6. **Be Proactive about Access:**

   a. Public meetings should be held at times and places that are convenient and accessible to the public, including low-income residents. Evening and weekend meetings should be scheduled at locations that are well served by public transit that runs at night and on weekends.

   b. Assure meaningful opportunities to participate by Limited English Proficient residents based upon language needs of local communities and not merely a request for translation. Identify the language needs of "communities of concern," especially in Priority Development Areas where planning and investment decisions may have the greatest impacts. Provide additional assistance reflecting the language needs of the locality in which meetings, hearings, and outreach occur.

7. **Do Not Disband the Equity Working Group:** Last round, the Regional Equity Working Group (REWG) was an effective forum for bringing together the best thinking on equity issues through an ongoing dialogue of equity experts, yet the draft Plan makes no mention of reconvening the REWG. At the same time, MTC should ensure that the recommendations of equity stakeholders do not live in a silo, but are brought to the Commission and to key advisory groups, such as the Regional Advisory Working Group, throughout the Plan Bay Area process.

8. **Establish a Housing Advisory Committee and Track RHNA Performance:** There is no plan to convene a housing-focused advisory group (pp. 21-22). Although this cycle of Plan Bay Area will not include an update of the Regional Housing Need Allocation

(RHNA), housing 100 percent of the region's projected population growth at all income levels remains one of SB 375's two mandatory targets. A formal housing advisory group comprised of a diverse set of local and regional stakeholders will help ensure that this target is met. The process should also include an assessment of whether the region is on track to meet the 2013 RHNA, and whether policy changes are needed to encourage and accommodate the necessary housing production.

9. **Demonstrate Explicit Consideration of Input:** Describe how public input from each of the varied forums described in the draft Participation Plan will be used in the development, evaluation and selection among alternatives at each key decision point. Provide specific opportunities for residents of low-income communities of color to meet with decision makers in their communities.
10. **Highlight Local Outcomes:** Residents connect to planning most effectively when they understand how it affects them at the local level – in their communities and neighborhoods. Describing throughout the Plan Bay Area process how decisions, scenarios, and plans affect transit riders, residents, commuters, and workers where they live and work will help ensure robust public participation.

We would welcome a meeting with you and MTC staff to discuss our vision for a robust and transparent process that will enable everyone in our region to reap a fair share of the benefits of the update of Plan Bay Area.

Sincerely,

ACCE Riders for Transit Justice

Miya Yoshitani, Associate Director
Asian Pacific Environmental Network

Carl Anthony and Paloma Pavel, Co-Founders
Breakthrough Communities

Matt Schwartz, President and CEO
California Housing Partnership Corporation

Sarah de Guia, Executive Director
California Pan-Ethnic Health Network

Wendy Alfsen, Executive Director
California Walks

Dawn Phillips, Co-Director of Program
Causa Justa :: Just Cause

Tim Frank, Director
Center for Sustainable Neighborhoods

Bill Magavern, Policy Director
Coalition for Clean Air

Frank Gallo, Steering Committee Member
Ditching Dirty Diesel Collaborative

Kate O'Hara, Executive Director
East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy

Gloria Bruce, Interim Executive Director
East Bay Housing Organizations

John Claassen, Chair, Genesis Leadership Council
Mary Lim-Lampe, Genesis Lead Organizer
Genesis

Jeremy Madsen, Executive Director
Greenbelt Alliance

Vien Truong, Director, Environmental Quality
Greenlining Institute

Gladwyn d'Souza, Principal
Green Youth Alliance

Joshua S. Hugg, Program Manager
Housing Leadership Council of San Mateo County

John Young, Executive Director
Marin Grassroots

Gerry LaLonde-Berg, Chair
NBOP Transit Riders United

Jill Ratner, Program Director
New Voices Are Rising Project

Pilar Lorenzana-Campo, Deputy Policy Director
Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California

Leticia Romero, President
Janis Watkins, Chair, Transit Equity/Neighborhood Development Task Force
North Bay Organizing Project

Judith Bell, President
PolicyLink

Richard Marcantonio, Managing Attorney
David Zisser, Staff Attorney
Public Advocates Inc.

Michael Rawson, Director
Public Interest Law Project

Joel Ervice, Associate Director
Regional Asthma Management & Prevention
A Project of the Public Health Institute

Tim Little, Executive Director
Rose Foundation for Communities & the Environment

Marty Martinez, Northern California Regional Policy Manager
Safe Routes to School National Partnership

Jennifer Martinez, Executive Director
San Francisco Organizing Project/Peninsula Interfaith Action

Shelley Kessler, Executive Secretary-Treasurer
San Mateo County Central Labor Council

Rev. Kirsten Snow Spalding, Executive Director
San Mateo County Union Community Alliance

Bob Planthold, Chair
SF Bay Walks

Peter Cohen and Fernando Marti, Co-Directors
SF Council of Community Housing Organizations

Rev. Earl W. Koteen, Member, Coordinating Committee
Sunflower Alliance

Clarrissa Cabansagan, Community Planner
TransForm

Ellen Wu, Executive Director
Urban Habitat

Derecka Mehrens, Executive Director
Working Partnerships USA

Cc: info@mtc.ca.gov; Steve Heminger; Alix Bockelman; Ken Kirkey
Enclosure: 2010 Comments on Draft Public Participation Plan