

Remarks to Select Committee, Feb. 19, 2016

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I'm Richard Marcantonio, with Public Advocates. We are a civil rights and anti-poverty law and policy advocacy group based in San Francisco. We work statewide on issues including affordable housing, transportation and displacement, and we are also a member of the Bay Area's social equity coalition, known as the 6 Wins Network.

The 6 Wins Network brings together over 20 grassroots membership groups and policy advocates across the nine-county region. We believe in the importance of effective, inclusive and accountable regional governance. Why? Because too many of our greatest challenges simply cannot be addressed at the local level.

These include:

- Tackling segregation patterns;
- Protecting existing lower-income residents from displacement;
- Creating good jobs for local residents;
- Air quality and public health;
- Reliable and affordable transportation options;
- Affordable housing choices near low-wage jobs.

Currently, some of these challenges are addressed inadequately at the regional level. Others are not being dealt with at all.

So we are grateful that MTC and ABAG have opened up this important dialogue about how we can improve our regional governance. And we are particularly appreciative that your Committee will be paying close attention.

So far, the inter-agency dialogue has been focused very narrowly. At times, it seems the goal is building a better bureaucracy rather than building a better region. Even so, this internal dialogue has sparked a much broader conversation. It is drawing in many other sectors, besides local government, who have a stake in the outcome: Social equity, business, labor, environment and others are offering the views of their own groups of stakeholders. And we are talking across sectors, too.

One set of stakeholders convened by the Greenbelt Alliance – including social equity, conservation and labor groups, as well as the Bay Area League of Women Voters – offered a set of three guiding principles, which we've shared with the office of Chair Thurmond. These principles depict, at a high level, a vision for the kind of transformative regional planning agency the Bay Area needs. In brief summary, that agency must have:

- A **mission** broad enough to take on the full range of regional challenges in an integrated and holistic fashion.
- In its **governance**, it must fairly represent the entire region.
- And in its **relationship to the public**, it must be truly inclusive, transparent and accountable.

Underlying these principles is our belief that we mustn't put the cart before the horse. What I mean is this: First we need to ask **why** are we engaging in regional agency reform, and only then turn to options for **how** we accomplish it. We think these three principles can serve as a yardstick for measuring the extent to which any of the options proposed will bring us closer to addressing the fundamental question of **why**. And we think that efficiency, while important, is a secondary reason for reform.

In conclusion, there is no quick fix that will bring the Bay Area together around a shared vision for regional health, welfare and prosperity. We are certainly not going to get there by the conclusion of the inter-agency process in June.

So this work will necessarily happen in two stages. First, the agencies will see how far they can get on their own between now and July. And then the Legislature, which created these agencies and endowed them with their current structures, roles and responsibilities, will need to address the bigger, longer-term reform that so many stakeholders are asking for.

We are committed to working closely with you in both stages of this process.