



# Memorandum

**TO:** BUILDING BETTER  
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

**FROM:** James R. Helmer  
Betsy Shotwell

**SUBJECT:** ABAG/MTC TASK FORCE

**DATE:** 01-20-04

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Approved

Date

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## **BACKGROUND**

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) was created by the state Legislature in 1970 to serve as the transportation planning, coordinating and financing agency for the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area. In the Bay Area, MTC functions as both the region's metropolitan planning organization (MPO), a federal designation, and the regional transportation planning agency (RTPA) for state planning and programming purposes. MTC is responsible for the Regional Transportation Plan, a comprehensive blueprint for the development of mass transit, highway, airport, seaport, railroad, bicycle and pedestrian facilities. MTC also screens requests from local agencies for state and federal grants for transportation projects to determine their compatibility with the Plan. MTC receives policy direction from a 19-member panel made up of appointed local elected and agency officials from throughout the Bay Area.

In 1961, the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) was established to protect local control, plan for the future, and promote cooperation on issues of area-wide significance. Like other Councils of Government in California, ABAG addresses regional issues, which include land use, housing, environmental quality, and economic development. ABAG provides a wide range of services to its members, most notably demographic projections (e.g., *Projections 2002*) and the allocation of the regional housing need for inclusion in city and county General Plan Housing Element updates per state law. ABAG is overseen by a General Assembly made up of 109 members representing each of the 100 cities and nine counties in the Bay Area. An Executive Board of 38 elected officials from member cities and counties directs the organization's operations.

## **ANALYSIS**

During 2001-2002 State Legislative Session, Senator Tom Torlakson from Contra Costa County introduced SB 1243 to study the feasibility of combining MTC and ABAG into the San Francisco Bay Area Regional Government Commission. The goal of this new regional organization was to increase government efficiency, streamline operations, coordinate agency function, and develop a regional vision for economic growth, transportation, housing, employment, and other issues that affect quality of life for Bay Area residents with a commitment to a long-term goal of creating a stronger, more integrated regional process for making decisions regarding transportation, land-use, local government finance, and housing.

### Current Activities

Senator Torlakson introduced SB 170 on February 12, 2003. This measure states the intent of the Legislature that cities, counties, and regional agencies in the San Francisco Bay Area begin a constructive dialogue about regional infrastructure issues. Additionally, on February 20, 2003, Assemblymember Simon Salinas introduced AB 829. AB 829, states the intent, findings and declarations of the Legislature concerning regional land use and transportation planning efforts in the San Francisco Bay area, including providing equitable and proportional representation in decision-making. Both two-year bills are acting as placeholders enabling the Members to amend the bills at a later date with more specific language.

Concurrently with the activities in the State Legislature, representatives of ABAG and MTC met as a joint task force to examine methods for improving comprehensive regional planning, including possible organizational and structural changes to ABAG and MTC. The Task Force held six meetings, to discuss ways to better integrate land use and transportation planning in the region and to explore the issue of merger of the two agencies.

Although a merger of the two agencies was not the outcome of the Task Force, it was recommended that a permanent joint standing committee, consisting of representatives of the ABAG Board and MTC Commission be created. Pending approval of the formation of the committee by the ABAG Board and the MTC Commission, the standing committee would focus its efforts on periodically updating the regional vision, and outlining implementation strategies, for consideration by ABAG and MTC. The joint standing committee would have the authority to comment on and review any substantial regional plans or strategies that are devised by either agency, including ABAG's Projections and MTC's Regional Transportation Plan and shall report directly to the Board of each agency. The specific scope of work for the committee will be developed in the future.

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