

March 10, 2011

Adrienne Tissier, Chair
Jim Spering, Planning Committee Chair
Metropolitan Transportation Commission
101 Eighth Street
Oakland, California 94607

Re: Committed Projects and Funds Policy in 2013 RTP/SCS

Dear Chair Tissier, Planning Committee Chair Spering and members of the MTC Planning Committee:

We are writing to support MTC's proposed new approach to "committed projects" and make some recommendations about the proposed "committed funds" policy. We encourage you to adopt these policies as a step to ensuring that only those projects that cost-effectively and equitably promote our region's goals of reducing GHG emissions, protecting public health and meeting other regional goals are carried over into the 2013 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

Committed Projects

We support MTC's proposal to evaluate all projects that have regional funding commitments that are not yet in construction.¹ In previous RTP's, so many projects were considered "committed" that there was little difference in the project lists, or outcomes, between the RTP alternatives. By reconsidering a broader range of projects, MTC's new policy is a critical step in moving towards a more performance-based approach. With greater variation between alternatives, the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) and RTP have a better chance of meeting SB 375 GHG reduction targets, the region's other adopted goals, and more broadly the needs of Bay Area residents.

We recognize that many investments that were included in T2035 will likely stay in the 2013 RTP. With this new policy it will more likely be that the included projects are cost-effective and help meet our regional goals. With so many external factors changing, from demographics, to growth patterns to economic projections, this policy will assure we don't simply fund legacy projects that no longer represent the region's best choices. It will make it more likely we can identify funding necessary to maintain our existing transportation system, expand where appropriate, and support Priority Development Areas.

Committed Funds

MTC has also proposed that funding sources that have in the past been considered "committed" based on previous Commission policy be revisited in this RTP. We encourage this approach, even with the uncertainty it engenders, and suggest the following principles to guide a new approach:

- Use funds flexibly to support transit operations to the maximum extent possible
- Use regional discretionary funds to encourage recipient agencies to take actions that promote regional goals (e.g., condition funds on local adoption of policies to create and protect affordable housing, or on local adoption of parking management strategies)
- Prioritize funds for Priority Development Areas

¹ For a phased project with one phase in construction but another phase not fully funded, the funded construction phase would not be evaluated, but any other phases would be subject to evaluation.

Regional funds must be spent wisely. This policy is especially timely because of the enormous fiscal challenges we now face, with more demands for transportation funding than the region can provide. By taking a new approach to projects and investments that have appeared in previous RTPs, you are taking an important step towards ensuring that the public's investments cost-effectively and equitably meet the region's goals and its residents' needs.

Sincerely,

Jenny Bard, Regional Air Quality Director
American Lung Association in California

Aaron Lehmer, Network Development Director
Bay Localize

Carl Anthony and Paloma Pavel, Co-Directors
Breakthrough Communities

Andy Katz, Government Relations Director
Breathe California

Wendy Alfsen, Executive Director
California Walks

Dawn Phillips, Program Director
Causa Justa :: Just Cause

Ann Hancock, Executive Director
Climate Protection Campaign

Evelyn M. Rangel-Medina, Policy Director, Green-Collar Jobs Campaign
Ella Baker Center for Human Rights

Gladwyn d'Souza, Project Director
Green Youth Alliance Wellness Watch

Stephanie Reyes, Policy Director
Greenbelt Alliance

Marion Taylor, President
League of Women Voters of the Bay Area

Amanda Eaken, Deputy Director, Sustainable Communities
Natural Resources Defense Council

Mary Klein, Executive Director
Peninsula Interfaith Action

Richard Marcantonio, Managing Attorney and Parisa Fatehi, Attorney/Equal Justice Works Fellow
Public Advocates Inc.

Robin Salsburg, Senior Staff Attorney
Public Health Law & Policy

Megan Fluke, Grassroots Organizer
Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter

Jaime Alvarado, Executive Director
Somos Mayfair

Kari Binley, Executive Director
Sustainable San Mateo County

Jeff Hobson, Deputy Director
TransForm

David Schonbrunn, President
Transportation Solutions Defense and Education Fund (TRANSDEF)

Bob Allen, Director of Transportation Justice
Urban Habitat

John Gatewood, Co-Founder
Urbanists for a Livable Temescal Rockridge Area (ULTRA)

Elizabeth Stampe, Executive Director
Walk San Francisco