



August 17, 2007

RE: 2007 MTC PLANNING CERTIFICATION REVIEW

The League of Women Voters of the Bay Area, representing 20 local leagues in the nine-county San Francisco Bay region, has been observing the Metropolitan Transportation Commission since its inception in 1970. We have frequently commented on MTC's regional transportation planning process and the Regional Transportation Plan as it has been updated over the years. Our comments and suggestions have reflected long-standing League positions on a balanced, multi-modal transportation system and on comprehensive planning based on a policy of compact growth that integrates transportation, land use and urban development, environmental and natural resources protection, human needs, housing, employment and economic vitality, and safety.

Prior Recommendations:

1. MTC shall develop a capacity for comprehensive planning either in an agency merger with the Association of Bay Area Governments or by providing funding for ABAG under an interagency agreement. Review of transit station area specific plans and of new areas proposed for development to achieve more sustainable, equitable, multimodal land use patterns seems a critical function. Comparative analysis of alternative transportation system investments to inform public decisions is another critical function.
2. MTC shall achieve a more equitable representation of the Bay Area population and extend representation to transit agencies in relation to ridership.

Regional Governance

In the past, the LWV Bay Area has expressed concerns about the lack of an integrated regional government for the San Francisco area. While this ideal of ours is not anywhere near a reality, we are heartened by the increasing cooperation between the existing single-purpose agencies Association of Bay Area Governments, Bay Conservation and Development Agency, Bay Area Air Quality Management District, and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission as parties on the Joint Policy Committee (JPC) created by legislation in 2004. Not only is there delegated membership to the JPC of an equal number of commissioners from each of the four agencies, there is representation of each of the nine counties in the Bay Area. We have observed, also, that through this process, key staff members of all four agencies have worked as a team on many major regional policies including:

Land Use/Transportation

The essential connection between land-use and transportation and potential roles of the transportation agency in leveraging better land use has recently been escalated through the use of the Association of Bay Area Governments' policy based projections and with its focus on coordinating transit improvements with infill developments for system expansions. MTC has been a major participant in a regional Smart Growth effort with four other regional agencies and has expanded several grant programs to encourage TOD development near transit stations.

Public Involvement

Since the review in 2003, we have observed improved public access by internet to meetings, including audiocasts and full packets on-line, and a variety of other transportation information. Additionally, the fact that the public participation plan has been re-released in draft form with revisions based on public comments indicates that MTC has heard concerns about the participation process.

Connectivity Among Systems

We believe that there should be a regional system in which the various services connect and interact, and that riders can have a successful, integrated trip. Important among this is the Transbay Terminal in San Francisco which would integrate Caltrain, SF Muni, BART, and other bus services in a major hub. Whether or not the high speed rail comes to this terminous, it is important that it be funded as a critical connection. Also, we would note that MTC had addressed the issue of connections in other points and had made efforts to work on how riders can make better connections as they travel.

The League will be interested in this FTA and FHWA review for any suggestions from a more national perspective.

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LWV of the Bay Area