



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE BAY AREA
An Inter-League Organization of the San Francisco Bay Area



July 2, 2005

James Sperring, Chair
MTC Planning and Operations Committee
101 Eighth Street
Oakland, CA 94607

Re: MTC Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Policy for Transit Extensions

Dear Commissioner Sperring,

I regret that we will not be able to be present for your hearing on Friday, July 8 due to a previously planned retreat of our full Board that morning. These are our comments on the proposed policy in its current draft form.

The League of Women Voters of the Bay Area supports the coordination of transportation planning with land use and air quality policies. We continue to support the adoption of a policy that conditions funding for transit service extensions on the basis of appropriate land use around the new station areas.

We really want this TOD policy to work, both in terms of encouraging minimum densities that justify the T2030 plan extensions as well as fulfilling the Smart Growth Vision for infill development. This would include more intensity at transit stations, and provide affordable housing for the most transit-dependent population. We are mindful that this is not something that MTC can accomplish by itself; it needs the cooperation of those who make the local land use decisions. The corridor working groups are a good method for coordinating local solutions.

Corridor Threshold Levels

The basis for evaluating an MTC TOD policy should be whether or not it fulfills the expectations or projections used for the T2030 plan. We believe the thresholds in this draft policy are set too low to meet MTC's Transportation Plan obligations. The current draft policy plans to achieve 42,000 new dwelling units at the new station areas, or at most to serve a population increase of 113,400. This is only 7% of the latest projected growth in the region between now and 2030 (ABAG Projections 2005). The T2030 Plan was based on an assumption that HALF of the future population growth would occur in infill areas, and one could assume that the most dense, easiest to accomplish, infill would be near new transit stations. If the infill growth is not met, the region will continue to extend its sprawl as the population grows and the projected transit ridership needed to justify the transit investments will not occur.

Jobs & Housing vs. Housing-Only Thresholds

We favor keeping the Jobs-Housing Thresholds, with the minimum Housing component. While it may be that jobs will be part of the specific plan development that would encourage mixed-use development with commercial services, the combined threshold would recognize that certain stations may not be suitable for housing due to prior land conditions or location, and other stations may be a higher priority for "destination jobs" served by transit. A Jobs-Housing Threshold would still permit as much housing as desired to meet the total target (i.e. could be all housing).

Affordable Housing Provisions

We urge the adoption of alternative (b) that would require either an inclusionary housing ordinance OR the provision of 15% below market housing in station areas averaged over the entire corridor, combined with the 20% bonus for affordable units toward the housing threshold. This will result in at least 15 % of the housing in the station areas that are affordable. The option for 50% bonus for affordable housing toward the threshold, while it may add affordable housing, has the effect of not meeting the numerical requirements of the T2030 policy. We want the total threshold to be met and of that total at least a reasonable percentage new units should be affordable. It is normal practice in most cities to require a percentage of affordable housing units with new developments.

We are continuing to encourage our local Leagues to be informed and participate in the decisions for each of the corridors and station area plans and to support LWVBA regional principles at the local level. In fact, several local League members have provided input to the above statement as a result of attending the MTC outreach workshops and tours.

Linda Craig, President

Attachment: LWVBA Goals for Transit-Oriented Development

cc by e-mail: MTC Committee Members and staff

Attachment:

League of Women Voters of the Bay Area
supports the following
Goals for Transit-Oriented Development

Land Uses and Residential Densities Around Transit Stations and Stops

1. Improved accessibility to transit and increase transit ridership, by providing for higher density/higher intensity, walkable communities near transit stations and stops.
2. Encourage a mix of transit-supportive residential, commercial, and employment opportunities, to make transit-oriented development attractive to a wider market

Infill Housing and Housing Affordability

1. Efficiently use the land within walking distance of a transit station to provide housing, meet regional housing needs, and better encourage transit ridership.
2. Provide housing that meets the needs of people at all incomes and that includes both rental and sale units.

Retail and Office

1. Provide for neighborhood-serving retail that is primarily supported by households and office workers within the Transit Zones
2. Encourage uses with greater employment density and design that encourages transit ridership.
3. Prevent incompatible uses, such as big box and other regional retail that generates mostly vehicular traffic and discourages transit use.

Parking

1. Minimize the amount of land dedicated to parking, while still providing sufficient access to stations.
2. Encourage station access by walking, biking and transit.

Pedestrian and Bike Friendly Environment

1. Encourage transit ridership, bicycle and pedestrian activity, and access for people with disabilities by providing high levels of access, safety, and continuity for pedestrians and bicyclists in the transit area.

(Approved by LWVBA Board of Directors on July 19, 2004)