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Memorandum

TO: Minority Citizens Advisory Committee –
Transportation 2035 Equity Analysis Subcommittee

DATE: Feb. 13, 2008

FR: Jennifer Yeaman

RE: Transportation 2035 Equity Analysis: Further Discussion and Staff Recommendation

This memo summarizes what will be covered at your February 19 subcommittee meeting, provides a discussion of the issues underlying the recommendation under consideration, and notes the input we would like to receive at the meeting.

At your January meeting, staff presented an overview of the MTC Travel Forecasting Model and provided a review of the equity indicators derived from the model to develop previous RTP Equity Analyses. As a reminder, these indicators were: (1) Access to jobs, (2) Access to essential destinations, (3) Average and aggregate travel time, (4) User benefits, and (5) Vehicle travel and emissions. You also received a copy of the Transportation 2030 Equity Analysis Report's executive summary, which highlighted the key findings that resulted from these model-based indicators.

These indicators relied on MTC's model as a tool to forecast Plan *outcomes*. These outcomes were primarily mobility and accessibility changes relative to base-year conditions that were forecast under different Plan investment alternatives and then compared between communities of concern and the rest of the Bay Area. (As a reminder, communities of concern are made up of Travel Analysis Zones (TAZes) where the population is at least 70% minority and 30% low-income. The Transportation 2030 Equity Analysis identified 44 communities of concern in the Bay Area based on 2000 Census data, which remains the most recent data set available to define these communities geographically.) As with almost any methodological tool, there are both advantages and drawbacks to using the model to carry out an Equity Analysis of Plan outcomes.

Advantages include:

- The model is the single most effective way to measure access and mobility.
- The data and methodology underlying the model are highly refined.

Drawbacks include:

- The equity indicators produced can be hard to relate to in terms of day-to-day life.
- The model's assumptions are not transparent in the results.
- It offers many different ways — but no clear “best” way — to look at the data.

Evaluating Plan Alternatives for Equity: Inputs and Outcomes

There is no single way to define equity in transportation planning. It is a complex topic that means different things to different people, and any single definition of equity has inherent limitations. A more robust definition considers multiple dimensions of equity, including both inputs and outcomes.

Emphasizing model-based Plan *outcomes* in terms of accessibility, as has been done in past Equity Analyses, limits the scope of equity to users' *opportunities*. A transportation model cannot forecast the actual *results* these access opportunities are intended to provide: a person's ability to access and retain a good-paying job, for example, or improved health that results from having better access to healthy food and medical care. In this way, the accessibility "outcome" as derived from the model is a proxy for results that cannot be forecast by a travel model, such as whether an employer providing good-paying jobs locates near people who need them, or where individual establishments such as grocery stores choose to locate.

In addition to forecasting the Plan's *outcomes*, it is also possible to analyze equity in terms of the Plan's *inputs*, namely the funding which the Plan dedicates to different locations or socioeconomic groups via the various investment packages put forth in the Plan. MTC staff conducted this type of analysis on the projects contained in the Transportation 2030 Plan in 2006. Staff believes a Plan funding analysis accomplishes two key goals in the pursuit of a meaningful and informative RTP Equity Analysis: (1) the performance measures related to Plan funding inputs are tangible and meaningful (dollars invested per capita, for example) and (2) it can provide more direct and relevant input into RTP policy discussions.

Equity and Affordability in the Transportation 2035 Visioning Process

Equity and affordability have emerged as cross-cutting issues in the Transportation 2035 Visioning process. At MTC's Bay Area on the Move Summit in October, staff presented the results of sensitivity tests of land use and pricing policy packages performed on various infrastructure scenarios. These scenario assessments revealed the important role that future policy decisions related to land use and pricing would play in determining affordability of transportation and housing expenditures for lower-income households. It is expected that affordability will continue to play a role in RTP policy discussions going forward, particularly those related to land use and pricing. Data coming from the current Equity Analysis could help inform discussions of equity-related policies.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends pursuing an Equity Analysis broadens the scope of equity to include both Plan inputs and outcomes, while also contributing to a discussion of equity-related RTP policies. Therefore, staff recommends the following approach for the Transportation 2035 Equity Analysis:

1. Quantitative analysis of Plan inputs: Financial investments
2. Quantitative analysis of Plan outcomes:
 - a. User benefits (travel time and out-of-pocket savings)
 - b. Accessibility benefits (including some measure of access relative to cost of travel)
 - c. Environmental effects
3. Development of a set of equity-related policies to address the impacts of pricing and other RTP policies on low-income users.

Staff looks forward to your input on this approach for the Equity Analysis. At future meetings, staff hopes to receive your input on specific indicators to be presented under the quantitative analyses. In particular, it will be helpful to identify exactly what kinds of indicators could most effectively inform discussions of potential equity-related policies.