METROPOLITAN
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

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Memorandum

TO: Partnership Technical Advisory Committee DATE: March 17, 2008

FR: Ashley Nguyen W. I.

RE: Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the Transportation 2035 Plan

MTC, as the Lead Agency, will prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Transportation 2035 Plan in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This Notice of Preparation (NOP) is intended to seek comments with specific detail about the scope and content of the environmental information that will be evaluated in the EIR. **Attachment A** to this memo is the full NOP.

The Transportation 2035 Plan is a master plan required by state and federal planning law to guide the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area Region's transportation investments over the next 25 years. The program-level EIR for the Transportation 2035 Plan will analyze the broad, regional environmental impacts of implementing the investments identified in the plan. Environmental resource areas to be evaluated in this EIR include transportation, air quality, energy, climate change, geology and seismicity, biological resources, water resources, visual resources, noise, cultural resources, population, housing and social environment, and land use.

Two regional scoping meetings were held to solicit input on the scope and content of the Draft EIR.

Monday, March 10, 2008
10:00 a.m. to Noon
Joseph P. Bort MetroCenter
Claremont Conference Room
(See receptionist on 3rd Floor)
101 Eighth Street
Oakland, CA 94607

Thursday, March 13, 2008
6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Joseph P. Bort MetroCenter
Lawrence D. Dahms Auditorium
101 Eighth Street
Oakland, CA 94607

Comments must be received by MTC by no later than March 21, 2008. Send comments to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, 101 Eighth Street, Oakland, CA 94607 (attention: Ashley Nguyen, EIR Project Manager).

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Notice of Preparation

To: Interested Agencies, Organizations, and Individuals

Subject: **Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Transportation 2035 Plan**

Lead Agency:
Metropolitan Transportation Commission
101 Eighth Street
Oakland, CA 94607-4700

MTC Contact Person:
Ashley Nguyen, Project Manager
Phone: 510.817.5809
Fax: 510.817.5848
Email: anguyen@mtc.ca.gov

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), as the Lead Agency, will prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Transportation 2035 Plan in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

This Notice of Preparation (NOP) is intended to seek comments with specific detail about the scope and content of the environmental information that will be evaluated in the EIR. Agencies who have statutory responsibilities in connection with the project to be evaluated should share their views. Such agencies will need to use the EIR prepared by our agency when considering a permit or other approval of a discrete project from the Transportation 2035 Plan.

Two regional scoping meetings will be held to solicit input on the scope and content of the Draft EIR, as follows:

Monday, March 10, 2008
10:00 a.m. to Noon
Joseph P. Bort MetroCenter
Claremont Conference Room
(See receptionist on 3rd Floor)
101 Eighth Street
Oakland, CA 94607

Thursday, March 13, 2008
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All interested agencies, organizations and individuals are welcome to participate in the scoping meetings. Oral and written comments will be accepted at the scoping meetings.

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date but ***no later than 30 days*** after receipt of this notice. **Please send your response to Ashley Nguyen, Project Manager at the address shown above by March 21, 2008.** Remember to include a return address and the name of the contact person.

The project description, location and the potential environmental effects are contained in the attached materials. An Initial Study is not required and thus not prepared.

Project Title: Environmental Impact Report for the Transportation 2035 Plan

Project Location: San Francisco Bay Area Region, California
(Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, and Sonoma Counties)

Attachment: Attachment A: Project Description & Scope of Environmental Analysis

Date: February 19, 2008

Please direct your inquiries and responses to Ashley Nguyen, Project Manager, at her contact information listed above.

Steve Heminger
Executive Director

ATTACHMENT A
PROJECT DESCRIPTION & SCOPE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

The Notice of Preparation (NOP), along with this Attachment A, is being issued to interested agencies, organizations and individuals, to solicit comments that will assist in the preparation of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Transportation 2035 Plan, and to some degree, the preparation of the Transportation 2035 Plan itself. As a result of the responses to the NOP and staff analysis, the project description and scope of the environmental analysis described herein will likely be revised and then further refined through the course of developing the Transportation 2035 Plan and the EIR.

BACKGROUND

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) is the transportation planning, coordinating and financing agency for the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area Region (which includes Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, and Sonoma Counties). Created by the State Legislature in 1970, MTC functions as both the regional transportation planning agency (RTPA)—a state designation—and for federal purposes, as the region's metropolitan planning organization (MPO).

As required by state and federal planning regulations, MTC is responsible for preparing the long-range Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) for the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area Region. An RTP is a long-range comprehensive blueprint for the development of mass transit, highway, railroad, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, airport and seaport. The RTP is to be updated every four years to take into account, amongst other issues, new projects and fund sources as well as updated planning assumptions, goals, and objectives. The plan is developed based on projections of growth in population and travel demand coupled with financial projections. The RTP currently in effect –*Transportation 2030 Plan* – was adopted in February 2005. The adoption of the Transportation 2030 Plan was accompanied by the certification of the EIR for the Transportation 2030 Plan. These documents may be downloaded from the following website: http://www.mtc.ca.gov/planning/2030_plan/index.htm.

The 2009 update of the RTP, which is underway, is referred to as the *Transportation 2035 Plan*. Like past plans, the Transportation 2035 Plan is a program of related actions designed to coordinate and manage future transportation improvements among the various counties/cities and transportation agencies operating within the region. As required by federal metropolitan planning regulations, the plan will be financially constrained to projected transportation revenues that are reasonably expected to be available over the 25-year planning period; however, the plan may also include a set of illustrative transportation projects that would have benefits if additional new revenue is secured in the future.

The EIR for the Transportation 2035 Plan is a program EIR as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). A program EIR allows MTC to look at the broad, regional impacts of the program of projects/programs in the RTP prior to adopting the RTP. As a programmatic document, this EIR also eliminates redundant or contradictory approaches to the consideration of regional and cumulative impacts. It serves as a basic reference document to avoid unnecessary repetition of facts or analysis in subsequent project-specific assessments. Note that this EIR does not evaluate site-specific impacts of individual projects, which all individual project sponsors are required to do in compliance with CEQA and/or NEPA.

TRANSPORTATION 2035 PLAN

Working in conjunction with the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) and in consultation with Caltrans, county Congestion Management Agencies, transit operators, Water Transit Authority, other transportation stakeholders, and the public, MTC is now preparing the latest update to this long-range RTP, which will guide the region through 2035.

The Transportation 2035 Plan will present a vision of what our transportation network should look like in 2035 — including what will be needed to address future growth and congestion, and the role transportation will play to meet current and future requirements to improve air quality and protect our climate. The vision for the Transportation 2035 will be guided by the Three Es of economy, environment, and equity, along with an ambitious set of plan goals and performance objectives. The plan goals include safety and maintenance, reliability, access to mobility, livable communities, clean air, efficient freight travel, transportation security, and climate protection.

The key financial assumption governing the financially constrained RTP is that existing sources of federal, state, regional, and local revenues such as voter-approved county sales tax measures are assumed to continue to 2035. To qualify for state or federal surface transportation funding, all Bay Area transportation projects — whether for transit, highways, local streets, railroads, or bicycle/pedestrian facilities — must be included in the financially constrained plan. In addition, the plan may also identify illustrative projects that may be funded in the future should funding opportunities arise through legislative or voter actions; these projects/programs would be identified in the "unconstrained" portion of the plan.

The preparation of a long-range RTP is typically a two-year planning effort. MTC began the Transportation 2035 planning effort in early 2007 and anticipates that the Commission will adopt the Transportation 2035 Plan in early 2009.

SCOPE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

The EIR for the Transportation 2035 Plan will be prepared in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970, as amended. In general, the purpose of the EIR is to:

- Analyze the potential environmental effects of the adoption of the RTP;
- Inform decision-makers, other responsible agencies, and members of the public as to the range of these environmental impacts of the RTP;
- Recommend a set of measures to mitigate any significant adverse regional impacts; and
- Analyze several alternatives to the proposed RTP.

Specifically, the EIR for the Transportation 2035 Plan will be a program EIR, which is a first-tier CEQA document designed to consider broad, regional impacts of a program of actions (CEQA Guidelines §15168). Therefore, the EIR will focus on the entire set of projects and programs contained in the RTP, rather than on individual projects. This EIR will evaluate potentially significant environmental impacts, and cumulative impacts, and will include mitigation measures to offset potentially significant effects. In addition, this EIR will be the basis for subsequent tiered CEQA documents for site-specific environmental reviews that will be conducted by implementing agencies as projects in the RTP are more clearly defined and more detailed studies prepared. Specific analysis of localized impacts in the vicinity of individual projects is not included in this program level EIR.

Under CEQA, key impact categories identified for analysis in this EIR include:

- Transportation
- Air Quality
- Energy (including global warming)
- Geology and Seismicity
- Biological Resources
- Water Resources
- Visual Resources
- Noise
- Cultural Resources
- Population, Housing and Social Environment
- Land Use

Impact categories not specifically addressed in this EIR include recreation, utilities and service systems, public services, and hazardous materials. No significant impacts of regional importance are expected to occur in these areas. These impact areas will be addressed in project-specific environmental documents.

PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

The preliminary draft project alternatives that may be evaluated in this EIR are described below. It is important to note that these alternatives will continue to be reviewed and refined before a Draft EIR is issued. More precise definitions of the alternatives, or new alternatives, will likely emerge as the EIR scoping and planning process for the RTP evolves. For all project alternatives described below, MTC will use the latest planning assumptions in the EIR analysis.

As previously described, the Proposed Project is the Transportation 2035 Plan:

> **Proposed Project** – The Transportation 2035 Plan includes the set of transportation projects and programs that would be funded through revenues projected to be available over the 25-year horizon of the plan plus potential new revenue sources identified by MTC that could likely be achieved through either legislative action or voter mandate (referred to as the financially constrained portion of the plan). Projects will undergo project-level performance assessment and policy review to determine which projects will ultimately be included in the financially constrained plan.

The following preliminary alternatives have been identified for analysis in the EIR:

> **Alternative 1: *No Project Alternative*** – The No Project Alternative, required by CEQA, addresses the effect of not implementing the Transportation 2035 Plan. This includes a set of highway, transit, local roadway, bicycle and pedestrian projects that are in advanced planning stages and slated to go forward since they have full funding commitments. These projects are: (1) identified in the federally required Fiscal Year 2007 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), a four-year funding program of Bay Area projects and programs, (2) not yet in the TIP but are fully funded sales tax projects authorized by voters in seven Bay Area counties, including San Francisco, Santa Clara, San Mateo, Alameda, Contra Costa, Sonoma and Marin counties, and (3) not yet in the TIP but fully funded through other committed funds as defined by MTC policy such as Regional Measure 1 Toll Bridge Program, Regional Measure 2 (RM-2) Traffic Congestion Relief Program, and Proposition 1B.

Alternative 2: Financially Constrained Project – This represents only the set of transportation projects and programs that would be funded through revenues projected to be available over the 25-year horizon of the RTP (financially constrained element of the Plan).

Alternative 3: New "Pricing Concepts" Project – This alternative involves modifying the set of transportation projects and programs included in the Proposed Project in order to pursue potential new transport pricing concepts that require new authority for implementation. New pricing concepts explored under this alternative may involve market-based pricing of roadway capacity, downtown pricing initiatives (e.g., cordon pricing, parking pricing), and/or an auto operating carbon/vehicle miles traveled (VMT) tax. There may be other new pricing concepts proposed during the Transportation 2035 planning process that may be appropriate for evaluating as part of this alternative.

Alternative 4: New "Non-Pricing Concepts" Project – This alternative involves modifying the set of transportation projects and programs included in the Proposed Project in order to pursue new non-pricing concepts that require new authority for implementation. The specific non-pricing concepts to be explored under this alternative will be further defined through scoping comments and as the RTP planning process unfolds.

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