



METROPOLITAN
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

Agenda Item 4a

Joseph P. Bort MetroCenter
101 Eighth Street
Oakland, CA 94607-4700
TEL 510.817.5700
TDD/TTY 510.817.5769
FAX 510.817.5848
E-MAIL info@mtc.ca.gov
WEB www.mtc.ca.gov

Memorandum

TO: Legislation Committee

DATE: December 4, 2009

FR: Executive Director

RE: S. 1619 (Dodd): The Livable Communities Act of 2009

Description

S. 1619 (Dodd) authorizes \$4.1 billion in funds to provide capital (\$3.7 billion) and planning grants (\$400 million) to support sustainable development, defined as providing (1) a variety of safe and reliable transportation choices; (2) providing affordable, energy-efficient housing choices for people of all income levels; (3) promoting economic development; and (4) preserving the environment, among other goals. The bill establishes an office of Sustainable Housing and Communities within the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and an Interagency Council on Sustainable Communities, to bring together HUD, the Department of Transportation (DOT), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to facilitate and improve coordination of housing, community development, transportation, energy and environmental policy, among other goals.

Recommendation: Support and Seek Amendment

Discussion

The funding authorized in S. 1619 represents a welcome and rare funding opportunity to support both development and implementation of the region's sustainable communities strategy (SCS), as required under SB 375 (Steinberg, 2008). Eligible planning expenses include developing comprehensive regional plans, as well as updates to local zoning or other codes necessary to implement a regional plan and promote sustainable development. The eligibility criteria for the capital grants are also directly compatible with the SCS, including projects that are:

- Designed to achieve goals identified in a comprehensive regional plan; and
- Promote livable communities through investment in:
 1. Transit-oriented development;
 2. Transportation infrastructure and facilities, including public transportation;
 3. Creating or preserving affordable housing;
 4. Brownfield redevelopment; and
 5. Implementing land use, zoning and other code reforms to promote location-efficient development and sustainable development, among others.

The bill's promotion of interagency coordination among various federal agencies is clearly laudatory, but staff believes it would make more sense to assign the grant-making role to the FTA, rather than HUD. This is because FTA already has well-established relationships with metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), which serve as a key partner in the grant application process.

While S. 1619 is only an authorization of funds and, as such, is not expected to result in actual funds flowing to the region without an accompanying appropriation, staff recommends the Commission take a support and seek amendment position on this bill as part of our message to Congress that MTC strongly supports a program of this nature included in the new federal transportation act.

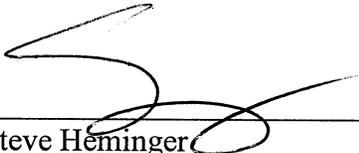
Known Positions

Support

- | | |
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| 1000 Friends of Minnesota | Minnesota Housing Partnership |
| Alliance for Metropolitan Stability | National Vacant Properties Campaign |
| Center for Neighborhood Technology | Network for Oregon Affordable Housing |
| Citizens' Housing and Planning Association | Northern Virginia Affordable Housing Alliance |
| Coalition for Smarter Growth | Transform CA |
| Community Action Partnership | Transportation for America |
| Community Housing of Maine | Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority |
| Crossroads Urban Center | City of Denver |
| Enterprise Community Partners | Urban Land Conservancy |
| Greenbelt Alliance | Smart Growth America |
| Housing Preservation Project | Housing Assistance Council |
| Maine Rail Transit Coalition | National Alliance of Community Economic Development |

Oppose

None



Steve Heminger