



Date: April 21, 2010
To: Regional Advisory Working Group
From: Ted Droettboom, MTC/BCDC/BAAQMD/ABAG Joint Policy Committee
Subject: A Local/Regional Partnership for the Sustainable Communities Structure

Purpose

This memo outlines the rudiments of a partnership structure through which the Bay Area intends to prepare its Sustainable Communities Strategy. A companion memo outlines a process to be employed by this structure.

Growth Assignment

At the core of the Sustainable Communities Strategy task is the assignment of growth to areas of the region in a manner that assures that all housing demand is met, that greenhouse-gas emissions are reduced (at least relative to what they might have otherwise have been), and that other essential qualities of sustainability and livability are maintained or improved.

Growth assignment is essentially a land-use decision. Regional agencies have some authority over transportation investments and they provide some limited guidance for land-use plans. However, they have no *direct* land-use authority. That authority resides entirely with cities and counties. For the growth assignment to be real, it ultimately has to be agreed to and implemented by those local jurisdictions. As well, local transportation agencies (congestion management agencies and transit providers) need to be involved to ensure a match between growth and transportation services. The growth assignment cannot be made solely by the regional agencies. It requires a local/regional partnership.

Configuring Partnerships

The regional agencies could negotiate individually with each of the Bay Area's 109 cities and counties to assign growth within each jurisdiction. That, however, would be too time-consuming and inefficient—particularly as growth not accepted in one jurisdiction would have to be individually negotiated as an addition to the quota of another jurisdiction or jurisdictions. The to-and-fro through the regional agencies could be endless. Alternatively, the assignments could be negotiated simultaneously in some sort of mega-meeting among all 109 jurisdictions—a process too complicated and too cumbersome to imagine.

To make the process manageable, some sort of sub-regional grouping of partners is required. In many cases, the most appropriate sub-regional unit is the county, where county-level, inter-governmental congestion management agencies are available to assist local jurisdictions in working out assignments and potential trades with one another. However, in some larger counties, it may be best for some local-government-partner teams to be convened, not for the entire county, but at the sub-county level—specifically around a major transportation corridor which they share. If the objective is to reduce

vehicle miles traveled, assignments and possible trades may be more meaningful and easier to visualize among jurisdictions that have similar travel patterns and issues. In a few rare cases, a corridor may present such a strong organizing principle that it makes most sense to follow it across county boundaries and organize an inter-county group to work out growth assignments along the entire corridor.

To assist local jurisdictions in organizing partnership groupings that are most relevant to the growth-assignment task, the regional agencies will present some options organized around travel-pattern and housing-market data. With their CMAs and local transit agencies, the cities and counties will choose the sub-regional units through which they believe they could most productively work with the regional agencies on growth assignments.

Forums and Governance

The assignment of growth to various places around the region is both a technical and a political exercise; technical in that it will rely on a number of measurements and analytic forecasts; political in that it will reflect our collective values for the kind of communities we want to foster and the kind of region we want to become. The assignment process will need to include both technical and political forums.

These forums will likely vary by county. They cannot and should not be prescribed by the regional agencies. In many counties, we suspect that the local governments will use existing inter-government institutions, like congestion management agencies, to help organize their participation in the Sustainable Communities Strategy. All CMAs have boards of locally elected officials, representing their cities and counties, and most have technical advisory committees of appointed local officials, particularly community planning directors and public works directors. In some counties other parallel organizations of local elected or appointed officials exist in addition to the CMAs and some may choose to use these organizations rather than the CMAs to bring local participants together. Some counties may choose to create new *ad hoc* forums purely for the purpose of working on the Sustainable Communities Strategy.

As a starting point, we recommend that local jurisdictions in all counties use their CMAs to convene an initial discussion of how they wish to organize for the growth assignment process. The congestion management agencies are uniquely positioned to make and implement inter-governmental decisions within counties, and most have an infrastructure in place to facilitate at least the formation of appropriate bodies to work on and oversee the development of the growth assignment task.

The organization employed by the local jurisdictions in San Mateo County for that county's sub-regional housing allocation process may be instructive to the kind of organization required to assist in sub-regional growth assignments. That organization included a Technical Advisory Committee composed of planning staff and a Policy Advisory Committee which included twenty-one local elected officials, one from each jurisdiction.

Ultimately it would be desirable for the sub-regional growth assignment to be accepted individually and officially by each of the local governments involved in its design. The regional agencies' *Policies for Implementing SB 375* encourage local-government

resolutions confirming participation in and acknowledgement of the local implications of the Sustainable Communities Strategy. To provide comfort to those resolutions, local jurisdictions may wish to conduct local public-engagement activities to build understanding and assess support for the growth assignments. These activities may be conducted either by individual jurisdictions or by sub-regional consortia. To the extent possible, the regional agencies will assist in providing information and other support to these local engagement activities.

The regional agencies are also obligated by SB 375 and by federal law governing regional transportation plans to conduct direct public-engagement activities, including general public meetings. The agencies will coordinate these activities with those of local governments to maximize the opportunities for genuine information exchange and meaningful public input.

Getting Started

To facilitate understanding of the proposals contained in this and other related memos and to improve the proposals with suggestions from our local-government partners, the regional agencies, in coordination with congestion management agencies, will convene county-level meetings around the region during the spring and early summer of 2010. These meetings will introduce the Sustainable Communities Strategy and the proposed partnership growth-assignment process to local elected and appointed leaders and will solicit ideas for making the process work better. CMAs will then convene the requisite meetings to identify appropriate corridors or other sub-regions and decide on a local governance and advisory structure with which the regional agencies will work in assigning growth.