



Date: April 21, 2010  
To: Regional Advisory Working Group  
From: Ellen Griffin, MTC and JoAnna Bullock, ABAG  
Subject: **Engagement Opportunities: Public Participation Plan Update**

Senate Bill 375 requires extensive outreach with local government officials and the public as part of the process of developing the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS). It provides the opportunity to engage communities in an important endeavor to envision and plan for communities that rely less on automobiles and create attractive, walkable, sustainable communities that can offer a higher quality of life for all.

In the Bay Area, the SCS will be a joint effort between the Bay Area's regional agencies (the Association of Bay Area Governments, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, the Bay Conservation and Development Commission, and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission), local jurisdictions, and numerous stakeholders. Each metropolitan planning organization is required to adopt a public participation plan for the SCS. In the Bay Area, MTC will revise its federally-required Public Participation Plan (Res. 3821) to reflect public engagement in the development of the SCS. ABAG will adopt a similar but separate document that contains the public participation plan for the SCS.

An extensive community engagement process is anticipated as part of the development of the Bay Area's SCS. The public engagement process will be supplemented by a partnership of local governments and regional agencies that will bring together a mix of elected officials, planning directors, county congestion management agencies and local transit agencies. Under this structure, 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.

### **Stakeholders**

In addition to the partnership among local governments (cities, counties, congestion management agencies, and transit agencies), a number of public stakeholders will be consulted, as called out in SB 375 and in federal legislation that governs regional transportation planning:

- Other affected public agencies (such as special districts, county health officers, resource agencies, etc)
- Opinion leaders, advocacy groups (transportation and environmental advocates, others)
- Neighborhood and community groups
- Broad-based business organizations
- Affordable housing advocates, home builder representatives, homeowner associations
- Landowners, commercial property interests
- Low income communities and communities of color
- Other interested parties and the general public.

### **Participation Techniques**

The success of the SCS is dependent on all voices in the region being represented and involved. This presents an opportunity to engage residents that do not typically participate in planning

efforts, and it is important that engagement efforts focus on under-represented communities. To the extent that funding allows, the public engagement efforts will include:

- Public workshops in all nine Bay Area counties (Over the course of development of the Sustainable Communities Strategy, ABAG and MTC expect to hold more than the required minimum of three workshops in each county with a population larger than 500,000; and one meeting in smaller counties.)
- Grants to community non-profit organizations in communities of concern for assistance in engaging their residents
- Use of computer simulation at public workshops to depict alternatives under consideration
- Specialized focus groups
- Statistically relevant public opinion poll (also available in languages other than English)
- A single Web site for current updates on the SCS (also accessible from the Web sites of the regional agencies)
- Interactive Web polls, kiosks, surveys, etc.
- Maintenance of a database to keep participants notified (via email or U.S. mail) of activities throughout the multi-year process
- At least three public hearings on the Draft SCS Plan, held in different parts of the region.

### **Advisory Structure: Use of New and Existing Advisory Groups**

As part of the advisory structure for the SCS, staff will utilize existing advisory groups, including MTC's Policy Advisory Council, ABAG's Regional Planning Committee, and the Regional Advisory Working Group

### **Principles for Public Engagement**

The public involvement procedures for the SCS will be built on the following guiding principles:

- Public participation is a dynamic activity that requires teamwork and commitment at all levels of an organization.
- One size does not fit all - effective public participation strategies must be tailored to fit the audience and the issue.
- Input from diverse perspectives is encouraged and will enhance the process.
- Citizen advisory committees can be used to hear and learn from many voices.
- Effective public outreach and involvement require relationship building - with local governments as well as stakeholder groups.
- Engaging interested citizens in 'regional' issues is challenging yet possible by demonstrating how the outcome can be shaped by public engagement.

### **Next Steps**

Staff requests comments or suggestions on effective ways to engage members of your communities or organizations. A Draft Public Participation Plan will be released for comment by MTC and ABAG in June. A preliminary draft will be distributed at your May 25 meeting. MTC and ABAG will consider adopting a final Public Participation Plan in September.