

# Transportation Solutions Defense and Education Fund

P.O. Box 151439 San Rafael, CA 94915 415-331-1982

“Solutions Is Our Middle Name”

August 21, 2010  
By E-Mail

Scott Haggerty, Chair  
Metropolitan Transportation Commission  
101 Eighth Street  
Oakland, CA 94607

Re: RTP Public Participation Plan Comments

Dear Mr. Haggerty:

TRANSDEF, the Transportation Solutions Defense and Education Fund, and its colleagues have actively participated in each of MTC's Regional Transportation Plans, starting with the 1994 Plan. Given that experience, we are well-qualified to identify where previous public participation programs have failed.

The number one problem in public participation is the disconnect between the input received from the public and the creation of alternatives to be studied in the environmental review of the RTP. This disconnect results from the insertion of MTC staff in between the input from the public and the creation of alternatives. Instead of the public creating its own alternative(s), staff inserts agency priorities into the creation of alternatives. This results in the policy preferences expressed by the public being filtered and distorted. We commented extensively on this in our April 7, 2009 letter on the Final 2009 RTP.

The solution is simple and straight-forward: A substantial body of non-profits actively participates in the development of the RTP. These groups have sophisticated and coherent foundations in transportation and land use policy. As such, they are especially qualified to provide thoughtful and innovative approaches to regional planning. Many of these groups already work together and share a common vision. The solution is to harvest the collective wisdom of these groups.

This could be accomplished by offering an RTP charrette process to the non-profits that have been involved in past RTPs. Those groups would self-organize into one or possibly more teams with shared values. (It is possible that business-oriented groups might want to form their own team.) Each team would then develop its own consensus goals, objectives and policies, leading to the selection of a project list that would

become the (or one of the) public RTP alternative(s). We believe there is a reasonable probability that the input from these non-profits could be fully captured by one or two RTP alternatives.

A process like this is not unprecedented at MTC. It bears a family resemblance to the Smart Growth/Regional Footprint charrette process that MTC and ABAG conducted a few years ago. The biggest difference would be the self-organization into large teams, so the number of tables would be much smaller--only one or two tables, hopefully. The other thing is that the team(s) would work together on an ongoing basis, until the alternative is fully defined.

Please note that this proposal does not assert that the alternative(s) would represent the wishes of all Bay Area residents. That is the responsibility of the larger Public Participation Program. **The purpose of this proposed process is to translate the suggestions from the most informed members of the public directly into an RTP alternative.** After having created two RTP alternatives in the past, TRANSDEF believes its fellow groups can manage the technical challenges, making the proposal eminently feasible.

A commitment in the Public Participation Plan to a public RTP alternative(s) would have a positive impact on the RTP development process. Knowing that involvement with the process will result in a tangible product that will then be evaluated against other alternatives will greatly encourage participation in the development of the next RTP. Wouldn't that be an excellent outcome for a Public Participation Plan?

Sincerely,

/s/ DAVID SCHONBRUNN

David Schonbrunn,  
President