



**METROPOLITAN
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION**

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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 2030 Plan

Lead Agency:
Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC)
101 Eighth Street
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MTC Contact Person:
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The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) is the Lead Agency and will prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the project identified below (see attachment). This Notice of Preparation (NOP) is intended to seek comments with specific detail about the scope and content of the environmental information related to your agency's areas of statutory responsibility to be included in the EIR for the proposed project. Your agency will need to use the EIR prepared by our agency when considering your permit or other approval for the program/project.

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.

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date but ***not 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 19, 2004.
Remember to include a return address and the name of a contact person in your agency.

Project Title: Environmental Impact Report for the Transportation 2030 Plan

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

Project Description: Transportation 2030 Plan (See Attachment A: Draft Project Description)

Date: February 16, 2004

Steve Heminger
Executive Director

ATTACHMENT A DRAFT PROJECT DESCRIPTION

INTRODUCTION

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) is the transportation planning, coordinating and financing agency for the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area (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 such, MTC is responsible for producing a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), with a minimum 20-year planning horizon, every three years.

The RTP for the Bay Area, last updated in December 2001 and subsequently amended in November 2002, includes regional transportation issues, goals and objectives, as well as projects, programs, and actions necessary to implement the plan. The RTP must be realistic and be within financial constraints. Any transportation project receiving Federal or State transportation funds must be included in the RTP. The RTP covers a 25-year planning and funding horizon.

The Environmental Impact Report for the *2001 Regional Transportation Plan* was certified by MTC in December 2001. MTC is currently preparing the 2005 update to the RTP, which is referred to as the Transportation 2030 Plan, and the program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Transportation 2030 Plan.

This Notice of Preparation and Draft Project Description is being issued to resource agencies and the public to solicit comments that will assist in the preparation of the Draft EIR, and in the preparation of the RTP itself. As a result of NOP comments and staff analysis, the draft project description and alternatives will likely be refined through the course of developing the RTP.

TRANSPORTATION 2030 PLAN

The contents of a Regional Transportation Plan are outlined in Government Code 65080, and are described below. The Transportation 2030 Plan will cover all appropriate issues associated with each element; however, the document may be organized differently.

- *Policy Element:* reflects the mobility goals, policies and objectives of the region.
- *Action Element:* identifies programs and actions to implement the RTP.
- *Financial Element:* summarizes the cost of implementing the projects in the RTP considering a financially constrained environment.

Policy Element

The Policy Element directly reflects the legislative, planning, financial and institutional history that has shaped the Bay Area region's transportation system. It is intended to frame and drive actions that will affect the direction and nature of transportation and its impact on the Bay Area. This can be accomplished in two ways: reinforcing positive opportunities and trends already in place, or stimulating new opportunities to achieve certain outcomes.

The Policy Element consists of distinct RTP goals. As part of the Transportation 2030 planning effort, MTC proposes new goals that MTC believes are more directed, measurable, and outcome-oriented, and therefore, should better guide transportation policy and investment decisions. The goals approved by the Commission in December 2003 for the Draft Transportation 2030 Plan are:

- A Safe and Well Maintained System
- A Reliable Commute
- Lifeline Mobility
- Livable Communities

- Clean Air
- Efficient Freight Travel

In addition, the Commission also approved a five-point transportation-land use platform to be implemented by MTC to further coordinate transportation and land use planning within the Bay Area and with our neighboring regions. The implementation plan for the platform would be developed in collaboration with the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), congestion management agencies (CMAs), local governments, and other key stakeholders. The platform proposes to:

- Develop a specific policy statement
- Supplement MTC's neighborhood-oriented Transportation for Livable Communities and Housing Incentive Programs (TLC/HIP), with planning incentives that support a broader set of land use objectives, such as specific plans for transit oriented and infill development.
- Condition regional discretionary funding for MTC's Resolution 3434 regional transit expansion program to the provision of supportive land uses in those transit corridors and around those stations.
- Support improved transportation/land use development outside of major transit commute corridors, including the development of a complementary open space plan.
- Better coordinate transportation and land use planning with regions that adjoin the Bay Area, and share the challenges of regional job/housing imbalance and growing interregional commuting demands.

Action Element

The Action Element comprises an investment program of short-and long-term activities that address the Bay Area's transportation issues and needs. Transportation modes such as roads and highways, transit systems, railroads, and aviation, maritime, bicycle and pedestrian use, and their respective local project lead agencies, are addressed in the Action Element. The transportation investments defined in the 2001 RTP will serve as the starting point of discussion about renewed commitments and new investments for the Transportation 2030 Plan. Projects and programs may be redefined, added or deleted from the 2001 RTP as the planning process for the RTP evolves.

Aviation and maritime elements are prepared in separate processes and incorporated by reference into the RTP.

Financial Element

The Financial Element is fundamental to the development and implementation of the RTP. It determines how much money is likely to be available to maintain, operate and improve the Bay Area region's transportation system over a 25-year period. As with past RTPs, MTC will develop a financially constrained element of the RTP, but also proposes that this RTP go beyond the financially constrained emphasis and include a larger set of projects and programs assuming likely sources of new revenues. This "big tent" approach, on a policy basis, provides a more cohesive framework for planning for long-term transportation improvements and analyzing the interrelationships between transportation, air quality, land use, the economy and other policy considerations. On financial grounds, this approach would anticipate new revenues beyond the financially constrained element and provide the opportunity to outline priority investments beyond the limits of existing funding sources. The Financial Element will document the financial assumptions that go into the Transportation 2030 Plan and discuss the financial constraints of each funding source and opportunities for funding the investment program contained in the Action Element.

SCOPE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

The EIR for the Transportation 2030 Plan will be prepared in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970, as amended. In general, the purpose of the EIR will be 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 environmental impacts of the RTP; recommend a set of measures to mitigate any significant adverse regional impacts; and lastly, analyze several alternatives to the proposed RTP.

Specifically, the EIR for the Transportation 2030 Plan will be a program EIR, which is a first-tier CEQA document designed to consider broad, regional impacts of a program of actions. 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 implementation 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 proposed in this program level EIR.

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

- Transportation
- Air Quality
- Energy
- 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

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 will emerge as the EIR scoping and planning process for the RTP evolves. For all project alternatives described below, MTC will use the most recent Smart Growth projections of the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) – *Projections 2003* – in the EIR analysis.

As previously described, the Proposed Project is the Transportation 2030 Plan:

Proposed Project – The Transportation 2030 Plan includes transportation projects and programs that would be funded through uncommitted revenues projected to be available over the 25-year horizon of the Plan (referred to as the financially constrained element of the Plan) plus new revenue sources identified by MTC that could be achieved through either legislative action, or voter mandate (described as the financially unconstrained element of the Plan). The new revenue sources include Regional Measure 2 bridge toll, High Speed Rail Bond, County sales taxes, BART property tax, a new regional gas tax, and increases in the basic federal and state fuel taxes.

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 2030 Plan. This includes transportation projects and programs that are in advanced planning stages and slated to go forward since they have full funding commitments. These projects are identified in the federally required Fiscal Year 2005 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and include fully funded sales tax projects authorized by voters in five Bay Area counties, including San Francisco, Santa Clara, San Mateo, Alameda, and Contra Costa counties.

Alternative 2: Financially Constrained Project A – This includes only transportation projects and programs that would be funded through uncommitted revenues projected to be available over the 25-year horizon of the RTP (financially constrained element of the Plan), as identified in the Proposed Project. As part of the Phase One Transportation 2030 effort, the Commission approved in December 2003 a set of regional project priorities to be included in the Plan. Under Phase Two, each of the nine county congestion management agencies (CMAs) will solicit public input on local project priorities, and submit the project listings to MTC by late May 2004. Taken together, these projects will make up the financially constrained element of the Plan.

Alternative 3: Financially Constrained Project B – This represents an alternative set of transportation projects and programs that would be funded through uncommitted revenues projected to be available over the 25-year horizon of the RTP (financially constrained element of the Plan). The projects will be determined through public input gathered through the EIR scoping and larger Transportation 2030 Plan effort, including MTC's Transportation 2030 performance evaluation, public meetings, and written comments. The focus of this alternative would be on projects that could further enhance implementation of the Regional Smart Growth Vision (which was adopted by ABAG in March 2002 and later used to inform the development of the policy-based *Projections 2003*). In addition, Caltran's high priority system management components, including extensive ramp metering, as well as enhanced funding levels for key regional operations program, including TransLink®, 511, arterial signal timing, and Freeway Service Patrol/Call Boxes, are assumed under this alternative.

Alternative 4: New Concepts – This alternative involves modifying the set of transportation projects and programs included in the Proposed Project in order to pursue potential new concepts that require new authority for implementation. This alternative plans for a core system of High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes. Congestion pricing is assumed on the Bay bridges in terms of \$5 bridge tolls in the peak period and \$3 bridge tolls in the off peak period. Also, parking charges at work sites are assumed in the travel analysis zones in the immediate vicinity of regional rail stations and major express bus corridors.

