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COMMISSION

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## *Memorandum*

TO: Partnership Board

DATE: April 10, 2007

FR: Ashley Nguyen, MTC

RE: **2009 Regional Transportation Plan Approach and Schedule**

### **Background**

MTC's current Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is the *Transportation 2030 Plan* adopted by the Commission in February 2005. Under SAFETEA (Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act), RTPs are to be updated every four years, so our next RTP update is to be adopted by the Commission in early 2009. Its current working title is *Transportation 2035*.

Each of MTC's long-range plans has embodied its own unique strategy to respond to the long-range transportation needs of a dynamic and growing Bay Area region. When the 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) instituted a requirement that RTPs be financially constrained (reaffirmed by successive legislation), RTP efforts became largely focused on identifying transportation investments that fit neatly within the envelope of forecasted available revenues. While this approach helps us to refrain from creating lengthy transportation wish lists, it also has its limitations because RTPs do not truly reflect the region's transportation system vision of future growth. In fact, previous financially constrained RTPs have devoted nearly 80 percent of available funding simply to maintain and operate the region's existing road and transit systems. As a result, previous RTPs have included a "vision element" to show the full array of expansion projects needed to address projected population and employment growth.

Since the 1994 RTP, MTC's RTP effort has focused on developing the financially constrained element first and vision element second. For example, the first phase of the *Transportation 2030 Plan* concluded with Commission approval of regional programs and projects for the financially constrained element of the plan. The second phase focused on local Congestion Management Agency (CMA) board approval of county projects for the financially constrained element of the plan. The final phase consisted of identifying remaining projects for the vision element and crafting Calls to Action for the plan. We propose a different, more holistic approach for the next long-range plan.

### **Proposed 2009 RTP Approach**

There are several planning activities underway that will help inform the 2009 RTP. These activities include: Freeway Performance Initiative, HOT Network Study, Regional Rail Plan, Consolidated Human Services Transportation Plan, 511 Strategic Plan, Joint Policy Committee's (JPC) global climate change assessment, and Focus our Vision effort. In light of these ongoing activities, staff believes that the full RTP vision should be defined first. Subsequent phases would follow-up with identifying a subset of financially constrained program of projects from the RTP vision to satisfy the federal financial constraint requirements. We wish to draw attention to four particular issues for Partnership discussion at this point:

1. **Defining the Vision:** MTC staff believes the Vision should be oriented toward goals and policies that help define investment strategies. Since the Vision is not financially constrained, we have the opportunity to think strategically about policies that best move the region toward its established goals. One approach could be to set quantifiable performance thresholds for each goal (for example, reduce annual person hours of delay by 10% from today's levels or reduce carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) tailpipe emissions to 1990 levels) and then measure the contribution of various policy-based scenarios such as, system management and operations, moderate capital expansion, and more aggressive capital expansion (both expansion options could include various pricing/tolling elements). The freeway performance initiative would form the core of an operations and management strategy and would be supplemented with pricing operations and management strategies for transit and arterials. The moderate capital expansion strategy could consist of a network of express buses and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) overlaid on a regional HOT lanes network; the aggressive expansion scenario could likely include Regional Rail Plan elements and other significant non-HOV/HOT corridor expansion projects. The Vision ultimately would likely be a combination of all the strategies considered. This effort would suggest how to balance the various components and would, we hope, help create interest in possibilities.
2. **Finance Plan Strategy:** MTC will prepare the 25-year RTP financial projections, accounting for those revenues reasonably expected to be available to the region and potential new revenue sources to needed to implement the region's Vision. However, rather than focus our efforts on divvying up uncommitted funds for the financially constrained element of the plan, all decisions on how the RTP finances are invested would not occur until after the RTP vision is fully developed. Using the last RTP as a jumping off point, we know that revenues will likely not be able to keep pace with the region's basic needs. The region will need to look to new user fees such as congestion pricing, which serves two purposes: helps manage use when demand is at its highest and provides needed funds to expand the system. Lastly, we may wish to consider maintenance, operations and expansion transportation investments that serve priority development areas identified in the multi-agency Focus Our Vision (FOCUS) effort, which further advances the smart growth framework of ABAG's Projections 2007 forecasts.
3. **Land Use Strategy:** As Projections 2007 continues to move us towards a "smart growth direction," staff believes it is important to assess how transportation investments can support this development and growth pattern. In keeping the momentum and progress made by initiatives such as MTC's Transit-Oriented Development Policy and FOCUS effort that is underway, we propose to fully assess the land use/transportation connection as part of the development of the 2009 RTP. The region is expected to add nearly 2 million people and 2 million jobs over the next 25 years. Even with smarter growth projections, the last RTP shows that daily VMT will grow by about 40%. Questions to address are: where will new housing be produced, what are the future growth patterns, how and where will people travel, what travel corridors will become heavily congested, how will travel demand and traffic congestion impact our air quality, and how can transportation policy and investment not only serve this development but also influence the region in smart-growth directions beyond the policy-based smart growth projections? .
4. **Role of JPC:** As mandated by state law (Government Code Sections 66536 and 66536.1), the Joint Policy Committee (JPC) will play a key role in coordination and development of the RTP and other major planning documents prepared by the regional agencies – MTC, ABAG, and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD), and possibly Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC). This includes the reviewing and commenting on major interim work products and the final draft comments prior to action by the regional agencies. A special planning area of interest is the FOCUS effort's identification of priority development areas and priority conservation

areas, and how they relate to the investments to be considered in the RTP. Similarly, the JPC's work on developing regional policies and strategies to reduce greenhouse gases (GHGs) and climate change will also be folded into the RTP.

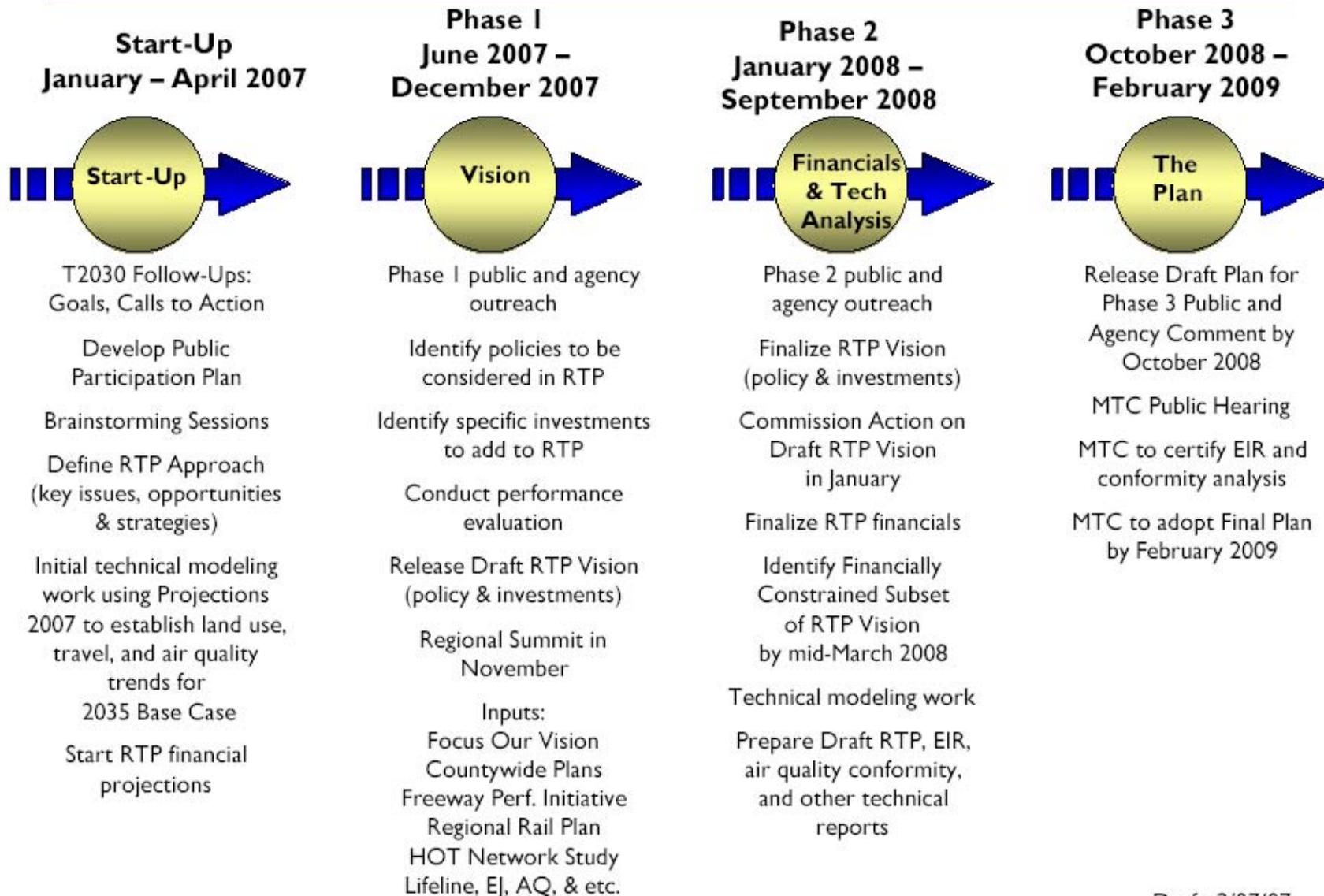
**Proposed Schedule**

MTC staff developed a three-phased strategy for developing the 2009 RTP, and outlined the key steps for defining the RTP Vision (as shown in the attached schematics) by the end of the year. Most of the effort associated with defining the nuts and bolts of the financially constrained portion of the plan would occur over the course of 2008. To date, as part of the start-up activities, we have conducted several brainstorming sessions with multiple stakeholders. As the plan effort starts to roll-out, we intend to work with the JPC, Partnership and stakeholders to define the RTP Vision and to discuss the many issues to be tackled in the 2009 RTP.

We look forward to your early input on policies and strategies that the region could pursue in this long-range plan.

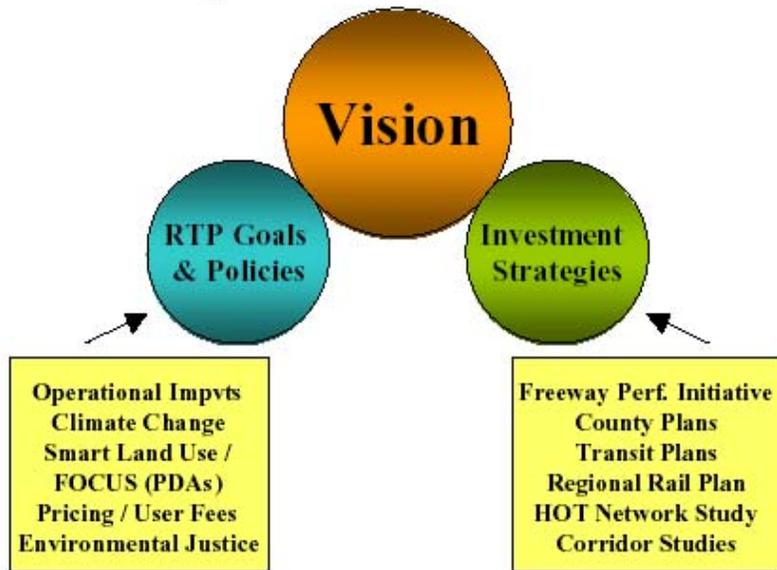
# 2009 Regional Transportation Plan Process

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# Development of the 2009 RTP Vision

## Step 1: Develop Vision



## Step 2: Assess Performance



## Step 3: Apply Policy Considerations

Vision Achievement

		High	Low
		Yes	Maybe
Cost-Effectiveness	High	Yes	Maybe
Low	Maybe	No	

## Step 4: Determine Vision Phasing



## Step 5: Apply Financial Constraint

