

Subject	Definition of Project Alternatives for the 2008 CTP EIR
Summary of Issues	The Authority has begun preparing a program EIR on the 2008 <i>County-wide Comprehensive Transportation Plan</i> . Authority staff and consultants are working to identify alternatives that the EIR would analyze. The Authority defined three very distinct alternative Measure J expenditure plans that were used in the EIR on the 2004 CTP. Now that Measure J has passed, many of the funding decisions have been made. Staff has identified some options for alternatives for the 2008 CTP EIR for discussion.
Recommendations	Provide comments on appropriate alternatives for the 2008 CTP EIR
Financial Implications	N/A
Options	Suggest other alternatives that meet CEQA guidelines
Attachments	None
Changes from Committee	

Background

Under CEQA, every environmental impact report must consider alternatives to the project. The basic requirement for alternatives is contained in Section 15126.6 of the CEQA Guidelines:

An EIR shall describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, or to the location of the project, which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project, and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives.

Since the Authority's *Countywide Comprehensive Transportation Plan* are "projects" under CEQA and since the Authority has decided to, as it has for its previous plans, prepare an EIR on the 2008 CTP, we must define alternatives to the proposed plan that would both attain the CTP's objectives and lessen significantly adverse impacts. The Authority began the EIR process with the release of a Notice of Preparation on May 13, 2008.

The alternatives for the 2004 CTP were easy to define since the Authority had outlined three very distinct alternatives for the Measure J expenditure plan. These provided clear alternatives to be considered in the EIR. The 2008 CTP, on the other hand, will assume that the projects and programs in the Measure J Expenditure Plan will not change. (In fact, they would be included in the No Project alternative as well.) The Project and No Project alternatives would thus include several significant transportation improvements — including the Caldecott Tunnel Fourth Bore, eBART, and the widening of SR 4 East — as well as a number of smaller projects. This limits the scope within which we can create distinct project-based alternatives.

The EIR on the 2004 CTP identified only one significant unavoidable impact, namely, the release of several air pollutants, although it identified several significant but mitigable impacts. One of the purposes of the alternatives for this EIR, then, would be to lessen the potential significant impacts.

The Authority and our EIR consultants, however, have identified some potential alternatives that could meet the CEQA requirements for alternatives.

Freeway Performance Initiative

As part of its work on the T-2035 Plan, MTC analyzed the impacts of a variety of ITS and operational improvements. These improvements including ramp metering, changeable message signs and variable speed limits. To model these improvements, MTC assumed an eight percent increase in freeway capacity.

The Authority could include a similar alternative in the EIR using the same method of analysis. In MTC's analysis, this alternative scored very well against the other scenarios.

Alternative Land Use

One of the actions in the Authority's adopted Vision, Goals and Strategies is to:

Support land use patterns within Contra Costa that make more efficient use of the transportation system, consistent with the General Plans of local jurisdictions

ABAG is in the process of developing an estimate of development potential within the region based on build-out of currently adopted General Plans. This estimate could provide the basis for an alternative land use pattern to be used to see if, together, those land uses would reduce air quality and other potential impacts.

Unfortunately, this ABAG-developed database is unlikely to be ready for use in the Draft EIR. Another approach would be to create a new land use database. This database would try to identify a land use pattern that would "make more efficient use of the transportation system" as called for in the earlier quoted action. This pattern, however, would require some work to define and would not necessarily be consistent with local General Plans, which is also part of that strategy. (Consequently, it probably couldn't be identified as the environmentally preferred alternative.)

Climate Change Alternative

This alternative would incorporate measures to limit conditions that add to climate change. The California Attorney General's office has identified a long list of potential measures to counteract the factors leading to climate change. Most of these measures are not relevant to a countywide transportation plan. The measure to "increase the cost of driving and parking private vehicles by, e.g., imposing *tolls and parking fees*", however, could form the basis for one alternative. It would increase travel costs in our Countywide Model to replicate the impact of new or higher tolls and parking costs. We would also assume an increase in tele-work — another AG-suggested measure — in the model as a response to forecast congestion, higher driving costs and improved communications technology. This approach follows the suggestions out-

lined in the recent update to the CTC's regional transportation guidelines, which were amended to address AB32.

We would also note that many of the measures in the AG's list are already part of the Measure J Expenditure Plan, including funding intermodal stations, supporting school bus programs, funding bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and providing TDM support through the 511 Contra Costa program.

The Authority is asking for the TCC's responses on these potential alternatives.