



CONTRA COSTA  
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April 26, 2011

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**Subject: Comments on the "Initial Vision Scenario"**

Karen Mitchoff

Dear Ms. Tissier and Mr. Green,

Julie Pierce

At its meeting on March 16, 2011 the Authority received a presentation on MTC/ABAG's "Initial Vision Scenario" (IVS). We would like to thank your staff, Doug Kimsey of MTC, and Sailaja Kurella of ABAG, for attending that meeting, and for their informative presentation of the IVS to our Board.

Karen Stepper

Robert Taylor

Randell H. Iwasaki,  
Executive Director

On April 20, the Authority reconvened and deliberated on a set of comments developed by the Contra Costa Planning Directors, a forum comprised of the top planning staff from each of our local jurisdictions. This letter transmits our initial comments on the IVS, along with recommended next steps for developing the detailed Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) scenarios.

We preface our comments by acknowledging that the purpose of the IVS was to initiate a discussion about a consensus-oriented regional approach to steering long-term sustainable growth and to thereby explore a potential regional sustainable growth scenario where development of two of the most vital ingredients to a sustainable Bay Area – housing production and transit service – was unconstrained. That is, we recognize that the purpose was to explore where development might occur without taking into account many factors that constrain the region's supply of new housing units and construction of infrastructure improvements, such as availability of funding, employment forecasting and current employment distribution, the overall economy and other market factors, so that discussion could ensue regarding how the Bay Area can accommodate projected population growth over the next quarter century in a sustainable way. We also recognize that future phases of the SCS process will include developing a range of detailed scenarios and testing feasible land-

use/transportation alternatives to achieve the greenhouse gas emission reduction targets mandated by SB 375.

We appreciate that MTC/ABAG has developed this vision, which provides us with useful information on what could be achieved if some of the existing barriers to sustainability were removed. We will continue to refer back to the valuable lessons learned from the IVS as we work with you to craft an SCS. Accordingly, our comments below assume that the SCS alternatives will be financially “realistic,” and that the forecast will reflect pragmatic objectives and policies as required for an internally consistent RTP under SB 375.

Our comments focus on balancing the regional distribution of growth, moving employment towards emerging population centers, and concentrating development in the PDAs to create a more realistic framework for smart growth.

**1. Establish a more realistic and balanced regional growth forecast.**

While the housing forecast is intentionally unconstrained in the IVS, our understanding is that the IVS job forecast ultimately used was constrained. We therefore are concerned that the job growth projected for the region may be well above market realities and inconsistent with historic levels – and therefore that the IVS may overstate the housing potentially needed in the unconstrained scenario. The methodology used by ABAG, as referenced in the staff Memorandum to the Executive Board dated November 5, 2010, does not, in our opinion, provide adequate justification for a sustained differential between national and Bay Area growth; the structural changes and weak employment increases that have occurred in the Bay Area over the past decade, in our view portend weaker employment growth than ABAG is currently envisioning. Moreover, we believe that the substantial projected region-wide increase in non-worker households is at best questionable.

We strongly believe that if constrained employment forecasting and current employment distribution are going to be used as part of an unconstrained scenario, revised regional, County-wide and jurisdiction-specific development forecasts should be prepared, informed by the available regional forecasts provided by State, academic, and commercial forecasting entities. In our view, the revised forecasts should reflect a technically sound relationship between job growth and housing demand, commuting patterns, and workers per household assumptions.

**2. Place employment where the necessary market conditions and development capacity exist and also close to existing and emerging population centers.**

Contra Costa, and the region as a whole, has many communities that are currently housing-rich, where residents are commuting to other parts of the region for employment.

Consistent with smart growth principles, new employment should therefore be focused partially on providing jobs for existing residents. We therefore support adding regional employment centers in close proximity to current and projected housing.

Adding regional employment centers in areas suitable for such development and close to growing population centers, creates the potential for reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT). One example is East Contra Costa, an area that currently shows the highest travel times (and distances) of anywhere in the County. This area, and other similar ones in the region, has a ready and sizable labor force nearby and the capacity for job growth, particularly if it is spurred by active economic development programs.

To reduce both overall GHG emissions for the region, and GHG emissions per capita, we propose to work with MTC/ABAG staff in partnership to identify the best locations for employment near transit and transportation facilities to encourage shorter commutes and more use of transit. We note that while San Jose, Oakland, and San Francisco are taking on a significant amount of growth, Contra Costa as a whole has equal or greater potential to become a magnet for future employment growth along major transit corridors.

**3. Concentrate development in all Priority Development Areas (PDA), identified Growth Opportunity Areas (GOA) and other urbanizing areas.**

The IVS places much of the future development in PDAs, GOAs and other urban areas, but this allocation appears overdone in some instances where the allocations are not just “unconstrained” but very likely physically impossible. At the same time allocations have not been carried to the full potential of other jurisdictions. In addition, some locations with identified PDA/GOA locations show negative growth in the IVS, however, this may be a simple error. Comprehensively identifying the sites within urban areas with capacity for smart growth and defining these locations as PDAs and/or GOAs could create a more realistic framework for smart growth.

### **Next Steps: Proposed Approach for Developing Detailed SCS Scenarios**

We propose to work in partnership with MTC/ABAG staff to develop the detailed SCS scenarios, applying what we've learned from the IVS, while working towards a preferred SCS that is both feasible and realistic. Here are four steps that we believe can result in achieving the SCS objectives:

**Step One – Refine the Forecast:** Based upon the current economic situation, and assuming reasonable growth levels for housing and employment into the future, the growth forecast for the Bay Area should remain at or below historic levels, and therefore lower than the attached forecasts for Current Regional Plans and the IVS. Once the SCS forecast has been benchmarked to historic levels, we would propose to work with you to tighten and improve the forecasting assumptions for Contra Costa.

**Step Two – House the Region's Population:** SB 375 requires that the SCS "house all the population of the region," however, it leaves the regional agency with significant flexibility on how best to accomplish this. In the IVS, "all" of the population (including all workers) was housed by increasing housing production by 267,000 dwelling units, while at the same time reducing the average number of workers per household (from 1.42 to 1.22). Even if more affordable housing is provided in the future, a large percentage of households will still require more than one income to afford a house in the Bay Area. We therefore suggest that MTC/ABAG assume at least 1.4 Workers per Household in the 2035 forecast. This would still accomplish the jobs-housing balance that SB 375 aspires to, without introducing unrealistically high housing production numbers.

**Step Three – Assume Financially Constrained Transportation Investments:** Regarding the transit investments, tripling the service frequency on existing transit lines under the IVS, while desirable, cannot be funded under the financial constraints of the RTP, and therefore it cannot be included in the SCS. Given that gas tax revenues are expected to further erode due to improved fuel economy and electric cars, available future revenues are likely to go down. We therefore suggest a balanced transportation investment program, maintaining available transit service, while also investing in streets and roads, and moreover, improving the efficiency of our freeway system through implementation of the Freeway Performance Initiative (FPI).

**Step Four – Introduce Pricing and TDM:** We believe that pricing and TDM should be applied on the margin, in a realistic fashion to help achieve the GHG emission reduction target. For example, due only to supply constraints, gas prices could easily surpass the

*Ms. Adrienne Tissier*

*Mr. Mark Green*

*April 26, 2011*

*Page 5*

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2035 price of \$5.35/gallon (\$2009) assumed in the IVS. TDM is another area where we can expect to see significant improvements in efficiency. We anticipate a dramatic increase in tele-work over the next 25 years, and we are optimistic that new opportunities will allow for expanded casual carpooling through the use of smart phone "apps". TDM strategies can provide a one-for-one reduction in GHG emissions (a one percent increase in the share of trips that are eliminated due to TDM activities could result in a one percent decrease in Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) and per capita Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions).

We appreciate this opportunity to provide initial feedback on the IVS. During the coming weeks, local staff will provide more detailed comments at the census tract level.

We look forward to working with you in partnership, as you initiate the development of the detailed SCS scenarios.

Sincerely,



David E. Durant

Chair

cc: CCTA Board Members and Alternates  
CMA Directors  
RTPC Managers  
Contra Costa Planning Directors

File: 13.03.08.01

Attach: Current Regional Plans and IVS Forecasts for Households and Jobs

**SF BAY AREA HOUSEHOLD GROWTH FORECASTS 2010-2035**  
**COMPARING CURRENT REGIONAL PLANS AND INITIAL VISION SCENARIO**

**HOUSEHOLDS**

	<b>BASE<sub>1</sub></b>	<b>CURRENT REGIONAL PLANS<sub>2</sub></b>				<b>INITIAL VISION SCENARIO<sub>3</sub></b>			
	2010	2035 Forecast	Δ 2010 - 2035	% Growth 2010-2035	Average Growth per Year	2035 Forecast	Δ 2010 - 2035	% Growth 2010-2035	Average Growth per Year
ALAMEDA	557,300	708,000	150,700	27%	6,028	770,000	212,700	38%	8,508
CONTRA COSTA	384,400	480,500	96,100	25%	3,844	538,400	154,000	40%	6,160
MARIN	104,600	112,300	7,700	7%	308	115,300	10,700	10%	428
NAPA	51,200	54,600	3,400	7%	136	56,000	4,800	9%	192
SAN FRANCISCO	346,700	415,000	68,300	20%	2,732	436,800	90,100	26%	3,604
SAN MATEO	264,400	322,800	58,400	22%	2,336	358,200	93,800	35%	3,752
SANTA CLARA	614,000	827,300	213,300	35%	8,532	867,900	253,900	41%	10,156
SOLANO	148,200	171,300	23,100	16%	924	187,800	39,600	27%	1,584
SONOMA	188,300	211,300	23,000	12%	920	231,300	43,000	23%	1,720
<b>BAY AREA TOTAL</b>	<b>2,659,100</b>	<b>3,303,100</b>	<b>644,000</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>25,760</b>	<b>3,561,700</b>	<b>902,600</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>36,104</b>

<sub>1</sub> 2010 base normalized to Current Regional Plans

<sub>2</sub> Current Regional Plans, ABAG 3/14/11

<sub>3</sub> Initial Vision Scenario, ABAG 3/14/11

**SF BAY AREA JOB GROWTH FORECASTS 2010-2035**  
**COMPARING CURRENT REGIONAL PLANS AND INITIAL VISION SCENARIO**

**JOB**

	<b>BASE<sub>1</sub></b>	<b>CURRENT REGIONAL PLANS<sub>2</sub></b>				<b>INITIAL VISION SCENARIO<sub>3</sub></b>				
	2010	2035 Forecast	Δ 2010 - 2035	% Growth 2010-2035	Average Growth per Year	2010	2035 Forecast	Δ 2010 - 2035	% Growth 2010-2035	Average Growth per Year
ALAMEDA	675,600	906,300	230,700	34%	9,228	675,600	925,400	249,800	37%	9,992
CONTRA COSTA	345,900	469,500	123,600	36%	4,944	345,900	479,400	133,500	39%	5,340
MARIN	129,700	147,900	18,200	14%	728	129,700	151,100	21,400	16%	856
NAPA	70,100	87,000	16,900	24%	676	70,100	88,800	18,700	27%	748
SAN FRANCISCO	544,800	698,800	154,000	28%	6,160	544,800	713,700	168,900	31%	6,756
SAN MATEO	330,100	442,900	112,800	34%	4,512	330,100	452,200	122,100	37%	4,884
SANTA CLARA	858,400	1,213,000	354,600	41%	14,184	858,400	1,238,400	380,000	44%	15,200
SOLANO	126,300	173,000	46,700	37%	1,868	126,300	176,700	50,400	40%	2,016
SONOMA	190,400	262,200	71,800	38%	2,872	190,400	267,600	77,200	41%	3,088
<b>BAY AREA TOTAL</b>	<b>3,271,300</b>	<b>4,400,600</b>	<b>1,129,300</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>45,172</b>	<b>3,271,300</b>	<b>4,493,300</b>	<b>1,222,000</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>48,880</b>

<sub>1</sub> 2010 base normalized to Current Regional Plans

<sub>2</sub> Current Regional Plans, ABAG 3/14/11

<sub>3</sub> Initial Vision Scenario, ABAG 3/14/11