

From: [Bob Allen](#)
To: info@planbayarea.org
Cc: [Dave Vautin](#)
Subject: Urban Habitat comments on Blueprint Transportation Element
Date: Monday, August 10, 2020 11:52:05 PM
Attachments: [Urban Habitat Blueprint Transportation Element Comments .docx](#)

External Email

Attached please find Urban Habitat's comments on the Blueprint Transportation Element.

Thank you

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Read our reports, [Driving Deeper into the Climate Crisis: Who Gets Priority on Our Streets?](#) and [Rooted in Home: Community-Based Alternatives to the Bay Area Housing Crisis](#).

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RE: Urban Habitat Comments on Plan Bay Area 2050 Blueprint transportation element

August 10, 2020

Dear Plan Bay Area 2050 Project Staff:

We at Urban Habitat would like to thank MTC staff for your work to develop the Plan Bay Area 2050 Blueprint. The following comments summarize some of the concerns and recommendations we have expressed in RAWG workshops and other public participation forums on the PBA Blueprint transportation element and related strategies. We look forward to working with staff and the MTC Commission to ensure that the transportation element:

- ensures that we meet our regional greenhouse gas reduction target
- reduces driving by providing expanded transportation options
- creates living-wage green jobs within the public transit sector
- provides the funding necessary for equitable, affordability, frequent, and high-quality public transportation for all Bay Area residents especially transit dependent communities and people with disabilities

To achieve this, we make the following recommendations to MTC's proposed Blueprint strategies:

Operate and Maintain the Existing System. Commit to operate and maintain the Bay Area's roads and transit infrastructure, while ensuring that all Priority Development Areas have sufficient transit service levels.

Recommendation: PBA and the Blueprint must address the current fiscal collapse of public transit in the Bay Area. We will need to identify new funding, including a potential regional measure, to not only restore the painful cuts we anticipate in the near-term but to increase service levels necessary to get Bay Area drivers out of their cars. Urban Habitat, in partnership with Seamless Bay Area and other members of the Voices for Public Transportation (VPT) Coalition have prepared a draft analysis, still under review, that has been shared with MTC staff and proposes strategies and service levels to increase regional transit ridership. We recommend that a similar analysis, informed by our study, be conducted by MTC and incorporated into the Blueprint and analyzed as part of the PBA alternative. Any new service planning should also include the paratransit system and the failure of that system to adequately meet the current mobility needs of people with disabilities as well as plans and funding to implement universal design standards.

We also recommend that a public multi-stakeholder process be initiated by MTC to facilitate the development of a regional transportation funding measure. The campaign known as Faster Bay Area is not the result of such a process. The campaign's assumptions, both in terms of a suggested revenue mechanism (a one cent sales tax) and its proposed expenditures (the portion of the measure dedicated to transit operations and the specific capital projects it recommends) appear to be included as inputs to the Blueprint Transportation Element despite the lack of any legitimate related public process. This should be addressed and corrected as the Blueprint process and PBA move forward.

Enable Seamless Mobility with Unified Trip Planning and Fare Payments. Develop a unified platform for trip planning and fare payment to enable more seamless journeys. Reform Regional Transit Fare Policy. Streamline fare payment and replace existing operators' specific discounted fare programs with an integrated fare structure across all transit operators.

Recommendation: Ensure that fare integration policies do not exclude unbanked populations and remain accessible to all communities (for example undocumented residents who are currently eligible for discount programs) so that there is not a “race to the bottom” effect in attempting to harmonize fares across the region.

Implement Per-Mile Tolling on Congested Freeways with Transit Alternatives. Apply a per-mile charge on auto travel on select highly-congested freeway corridors where transit alternatives exist, with discounts for carpoolers, low-income residents, and off-peak travel, with excess revenues reinvested into transit alternatives in the corridor:

Recommendation: Ensure that these policies do not exclude unbanked populations and that discount programs remain accessible to all communities.

Build a Complete Streets Network. Enhance streets to promote walking, biking, and other micromobility through sidewalk improvements and 7,000 miles of bike lanes or multi-use paths. Advance Regional Vision Zero Policy through Street Design and Reduced Speeds. Reduce speed limits to 25 to 35 miles per hour on local streets and 55 miles per hour on freeways, relying on design elements on local streets and automated speed enforcement on freeways:

Recommendation: Ensure that the proposed improvements in this strategy are equitably distributed through an equity analysis of proposed investments and that the potential displacement impacts are considered. In addition, the proposed strategy should avoid “enforcement” mechanisms, including in the development of networks of “slow streets,” that promote increased policing in low income communities and communities of color. Finally ensure that the mobility needs of people with disabilities are given priority in the design of these proposed investments.

Advance Low-Cost Transit Projects. Complete a limited set of transit projects that performed well in multiple futures and require limited regional dollars to reach fully-funded status. Build a New Transbay Rail Crossing. Address overcrowded conditions during peak commute periods and add system redundancy by adding a new Transbay rail crossing connecting the East Bay and San Francisco:

Recommendation: Given the rapidly changing economic geography of the Bay Area as a result of COVID-19, we should reconsider mega-projects such as a Transbay rail crossing and new rail

projects such as the San Joaquin Valley rail system. Instead, we should focus on development of a network of transit priority corridors (for example those outlined in TransForm's REX Network proposal) and frontload lower cost projects and programs that provide immediate benefits to riders especially transit dependent communities such as low-income communities of color, seniors, youth, and people with disabilities. With public transit service under threat from a fiscal "death spiral" we must end planning for future highway expansion project. The July staff report to the Commission notes, "with a seven-point gap remaining to meet the SB 375 GHG reduction target, we will be asking all major highway expansion projects to fully mitigate increases, going above and beyond existing policies." It seems unlikely that these mitigation plans can plausibly be expected to support the region's attempt to close the gap in our greenhouse gas reduction target. The staff report further notes that, "inclusion of major highway projects under the condition that further greenhouse gas emission mitigations are identified by project sponsors prior to the September 2020 action on the Final Blueprint.' Again, the climate crisis, and the Bay Area's failure to adequately plan for and respond to it, as well as the current crisis in public transit funding, demand that we adopt policies and make investments that address the scale of the crisis we face.

We look forward to working with staff on the Blueprint process and next steps in PBA 2050.
Thank you.

Sincerely,

Bob Allen
Policy and Advocacy Campaign Director
Urban Habitat

