
From: Bill Mayben
Date: Friday, April 21, 2017 at 9:34 AM
To: EIR Comments <eircomments@mtc.ca.gov>
Subject: current draft comments, Plan Bay Area 2040

Dear MTC Staff,

I regret that my schedule finds me out of state, and unable to attend the local public meeting regarding this draft plan. Please take all of my comments as efforts on my part to be constructive.

1. I believe efforts to “preserve Bay Area diversity”, are too late. Ersatz diversity will not do, will not replace authenticity. This is part of the natural evolution of supply and demand, and cannot be controlled.

Rents alone, both residential and commercial, will kill diversity.

2. Yes, there is a regional housing crisis, and a regional traffic crisis. I believe these are rooted in our failed and vain efforts to sustain a way of life that is no longer sustainable. The problems associated with our myopic view of how the Bay Area “should” work, are rampant, overwhelming all aspects of our lives. The concept of commuting IN ITSELF, must be re-examined; as should the concept of transportation planning. Transportation planning should encompass more substantial and salient efforts to remove commuters from the highways. Transportation planning, as all of you realize, should not have as its mission, preserving business and politics as usual. It is obvious to me that the economic underpinnings of the current plan serve certain established economic interests. This needs to be carefully examined. One example, which I will repeat, is the gas tax. The gas tax as a financial resource, perpetuates the very phenomena that are ruinous to the Bay Area. Your plan, actually includes, here in 2017, despite the clear fact that automobiles are destroying everything unique about the Bay Area, building additional freeways! We cannot build freeways to solve our traffic and housing issues. They simply engender more of the same. As a State, we cannot maintain the freeways we have. Dependency on the gas tax simply digs a deeper hole; serving the oil companies and other established interests. We need to do away with the automobile. Highways should be turned over to commercial trucking, busses and motorcycles.
3. In a large part, our obsession has to do with facilitating traffic to our three highest concentrations of population. Let’s step back from this and do some real transportation planning. Sea levels are rising. The climate is heating up.

I believe the best overall long term Bay Area strategy for housing and transportation rests in decentralization. If peripheral towns are supported in developing industrial, commercial, R&D, and office-based employment; supported with a regional high speed optical fiber internet system; we will be moving toward a situation where there will be both local jobs and jobs which can be done outside offices in one location. In both instances, the commute would either be local or non-existent. This will improve the climate, air quality, the strength and health of families, community involvement, and a more resilient Bay Area.

4. Obviously, our money would be better spent improving our public transportation system. This would facilitate decentralization. We can achieve better housing solutions outside the metroplex, more affordably, and more quickly. Obviously, the oil companies may not like this plan. Freeway contractors may not like this plan. Bureaucracies built around the current model may not like this plan. Bay Area 2040 should not be pursued to provide comfort to them.
5. Your plan discusses resilience, yet it is inherently not resilient. Picture a significant earthquake; tidal wave; a bomb; terrorism; etc. We are strikingly vulnerable to disruption because of our concentration. Everything would stop.
6. Any affordable mass housing plan for the center elements of the Bay Area, based on tax incentives, ratios, affordability requirements; are doomed at this point. The number of units required are far behind the curve, and the costs of new construction and land in the metro areas far exceed the concept of affordability. It is not realistic to propose housing solutions that are essentially unattainable. I have built 10,000 houses, including the land and land development, finance, entitlement and service of those homes. I cannot be hypnotized into accepting the residential projections in Plan 2040. They are not possible.
7. I would consider the budget projects of the Plan 2040, generally, to be “soft” projections. “ Plan Performance”, page 64, is rosy at best. On Page 66, you admit that the Plan only meets 1/3 of its objectives. We should look at this and ask ourselves whether we should commit to a plan that at the onset fails to meet 66% of its stated objectives. That is before reality sets in! We should do better than this.
8. On page 74, it becomes clear that Regional Planning needs to embrace decentralization as the only viable option. This must be coordinated on all levels. Jobs are the key to effective decentralization. Without a component to encourage the decentralization of the job markets; providing the tools to make that happen; housing and transportation will continue to deteriorate. Transportation Planning should REMOVE commuters, not build more freeways to encourage commuters. Transportation planning should relocate jobs, creating viable alternatives to commuting while at the same time creating a number of complete, resilient communities. Freeways should be for trucking and busses. Provisions should be made for effective resolution of sea level rise, far in advance of interruptions in our vital systems. There is no reason why the Bay Area cannot return to the air quality it had in 1850.
9. I believe it is cheaper to provide an ultra-fast, high capacity optical fiber BAY Area internet system; than it is to build and maintain more freeways. I believe such a system will create decentralization naturally; starting with R&D operations and back office processing operations; followed by the rest. This is both a job creator and a substantial financial engine. Surrounding resilient communities will add strength and resiliency to the Bay Area as a whole regional entity. It will sustain more people in a more healthy, more affordable, safer environment. It will provide for stronger families, as the “windshield time” and dislocation created by lengthy commutes will diminish.
10. We have to honor public transportation, and put our dollars where they do the most good in the long run. Delivering the automobiles to the cities is just the start of an expensive chain of irreconcilable issues. Parking becomes impossible. The streets holding capacity with hundreds of circling cars become impassable. The cities themselves become overrun and unlivable.

The MTC can either be a force for the best long term solution, or continue conducting business as usual. We cannot afford to be complacent. I believe it is time for some serious breakaway thinking, and time to open up the concept of transportation planning. Does the MTC want to be like CalTrans; continually behind the curve, over budget and behind schedule; or does the MTC want to become a cutting edge enterprise, truly distinguishing the Bay Area into the future?

To make an omelet, one must break a few eggs. I encourage a high-level cadre within the MTC, with the support and participation of upper management, specifically to make omelets; because there is a great deal at stake. We cannot continue to do the same thing expecting different results. Truth is, we deserve a better plan than this. We are better than this.

Yours,

Bill Mayben