

January 12, 2015

Greetings, MTC Staff,

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on issues by participating in the Policy Advisory Council, but would like to weigh in on the proposed public participation strategies in greater depth. Please accept my comments on the Draft 2015 Public Participation Plan (PPP) and Appendix A, the draft participation plan for the update to Plan Bay Area (PBA).

2015 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

Local and Media Partnership Information

The public information staff and library do excellent work, but please go a step further and **list the media outlets and community based organizations that you work with** or where people can go locally for information directly in the plan (**perhaps in additional appendices**), as well as on all websites and social media to empower residents to seek more in-depth information or communicate directly with their preferred local media outlet, service providers, or community resources.

Although there may not be identical federal mandates that apply to partner agencies in the Bay Area (i.e. ABAG, BAAQMD, BCDC), MTC and these **agencies should collaborate on proactive reporting** so that significant developments, opportunities for input, and critical decisions among MTC's partners are also publicized in a more centralized and effective manner. This is **especially important given the stated commitment to stronger inter-agency collaboration in the update to PBA.**

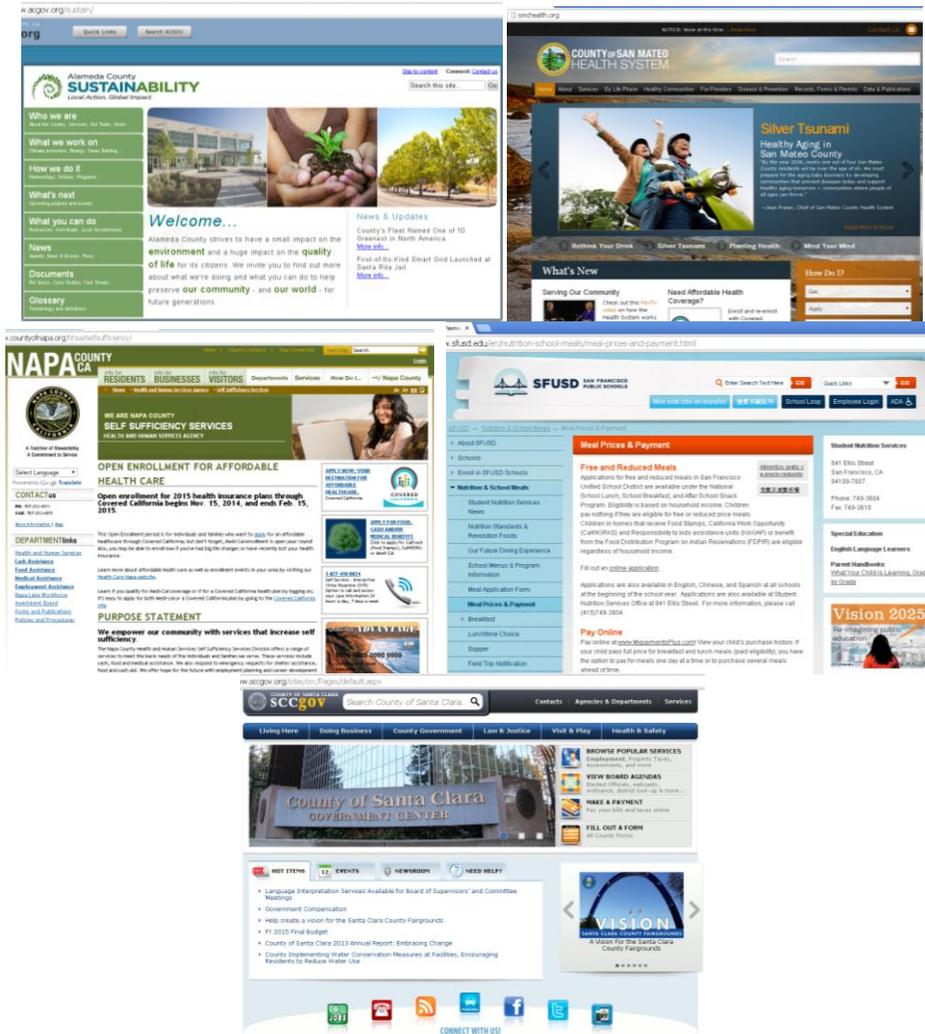
School, Faith, and City Communication Channels

I support and echo comments that partnering with and communicating through offices of education, schools and districts, school boards, and social service providers is a highly effective strategy in **meeting people where they already are**. This will require additional steps and increased cultural competency as MTC develops content and messaging to better frame issues, investments, and trade-offs in terms of:

- what people would like to see for their children's future,
- what current and historic inequities or mismatched investments they think should be overcome,
- what teens and young adults – our future leaders, and a generation even larger than the Baby Boomers – would change to bring about a more secure, sustainable, and successful region for all,
- what people define as legitimate, accessible choices for safe, manageable, and affordable mobility and housing, and
- what values residents prioritize, etc..

Cities, faith communities, and schools push information out to families and residents on a regular basis, including ways for them to provide input to local leaders. Integrating appropriately framed information about regional decisions, investments, and opportunities for action with these channels of communication is an efficient way to engage broad and representative swaths of Bay Area residents, who may not have the time or civic awareness to engage proactively.

One relatively simple option would be to partner with communications leadership in each of the Bay Area's nine counties, and the top 15 to 20 cities in terms of household growth, to place a small "spotlight" window or link on relevant web pages that would pose a question or announce upcoming meetings or decision points, and link directly to the appropriate MTC page. Counties could then extend this partnership to the community based organizations that commonly carry out select functions of local government. Examples of such pages are below:



Specific Examples of Promising Practice

MTC and its partners should integrate the engagement and framing approaches used by Washington D.C. and the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG). The ***unambiguous references to the critical intersection of social equity, environmental justice, public health, and the solvency of public funds in SANDAG’s development of its sustainable community strategy*** show a willingness to call out complex issues in plain English, which seemed to be sorely lacking in the 2013 Plan Bay Area process. In Washington D.C.’s ***We Move D.C.*** campaign and public participation process for shaping its regional transportation plan, the district used dozens of outreach approaches, including webinars, weekend meetings, tactile “games”, ambassadors, and input kiosks at transit hubs to meet people where they were and gather and reconcile their input. The Public Participation Plan, especially for the update of PBA, would benefit from implementing these tactics (e.g. <http://www.wemovedc.org/>, <http://metroquest.com/overview/introduction/>, <http://www.sdfoward.com/environment-communities/public-health>)

APPENDIX A: PLAN BAY AREA UPDATE PARTICIPATION PLAN

A critical flaw of transportation planning and performance assessment is the tradition of first determining the capital cost of a project, then determining its benefits. Due to the extensive work done during the development of Plan Bay Area 2013, MTC has an opportunity to shift this paradigm, and in doing so yield far reaching benefits for each city and county general fund, all residents, other metropolitan planning organizations, and the environment: the regional agencies must embrace a benefit-based threshold for including projects in the Project

Performance Assessment that is a key part of developing the RTP / SCS. The Integrated Transport and Health Impact Modelling Tool ([ITHIM](#)), developed by California Department of Public Health experts and validated in collaboration with MTC's own staff provides a perfect and feasible opportunity to do so. Every single community in the Bay Area experiences demand for emergency medical services, paratransit trips, truancy, and many other needs that drain local general funds, though many of these costs could be mitigated by an increased investment in safe active transportation choices and effective land use patterns at the regional level. Seemingly "small" bike and pedestrian projects that do not exceed a capital cost of \$50 million do not currently make it into the assessment, but collectively would yield far more than that in benefits. I sincerely urge the Commission to empower its staff and stakeholders to utilize newly developed metrics to better gauge the true costs and benefits of our regional investments.

Lastly, separate from the Regional Advisory Working Group (RAWG), I beg you to allocate some time and effort to convene a Regional Advisory Working Group (REWG) or something similar to continue the important and beneficial advancements that were made in the 2013 PBA. There are continuing developments that were tabled to "the next round of Plan Bay Area" and you are accountable for fulfilling those commitments.

Kindly,

Cathleen Baker