



Sonoma County Transportation Authority
Regional Climate Protection Authority

July 12, 2021

Therese McMillan, Executive Director
Metropolitan Transportation Commission
Association of Bay Area Governments
375 Beale Street
San Francisco, CA 94105

RE: Comments on Plan Bay Area 2050

Dear Ms. McMillan:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the draft Plan Bay Area 2050 (PBA2050). We recognize the very large and complex task of planning for housing, economic growth, transportation, and the environment for the next 30 years for the entire Bay Area Region. Added to that are the pressing policy needs related to climate change, equity, and a just transition to a regenerative economy. Success will require leadership and collaboration from local and regional partners.

As you know, Sonoma County is the largest county geographically in the Bay Area and has a diverse cross section of landscapes and development types. Approximately 20 percent of the land is devoted to residential uses, commercial, industrial and similar uses with over 80% of the landmass dedicated to agricultural land and open space.

Urban Growth Boundaries (UGBs) have been in effect in Sonoma County for decades to prevent sprawl and to protect open space from development. This tool has been successful in promoting city infill and is helping direct development into areas that can tolerate higher densities.

The jurisdictions in Sonoma County chose to create a collaborative body to address climate change in 2009. The Regional Climate Protection Authority (RCPA) is the sister agency to the SCTA, with the same Board of Directors and a combined staff. The RCPA is charged with coordinating countywide climate protection efforts among Sonoma County's nine cities and multiple agencies. The RCPA fosters collaboration, helps to set goals, pools resources, formalizes partnerships, and works across silos on policies, programs and projects. The RCPA aims to create local solutions to complement State, federal, and private sector actions – all showing that a better future with lower emissions is possible.

To that end, the RCPA adopted the Sonoma Climate Mobilization Strategy in March 2021. This Ten-Year Emergency Policy Package outlines countywide actions with the potential to significantly reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2030 under local authority. The RCPA will support the policy package by coordinating with cities, County and special districts to assist with policy development and prioritizing implementation.

Sonoma County voters also approved, and reauthorized, a sales tax to fund the preservation of agricultural land and community separators through Sonoma County's Measure F (2006) and Measure K (2016). Measure K requires voter approval on any changes to General Plans that increase the allowed density or intensity of development within Community Separators until 2036 and Measure F has been used to acquire land for the purpose of maintaining Sonoma County's open space and agricultural lands.

All of these policies and the work of SCTA/RCPA are consistent with PBA 2050.

Overall PBA2050 provides a robust policy approach to achieving regional goals and the SCTA concurs with the general themes and approaches of the plan. Specifically, we support the following:

- Infill development. Prioritizing housing with ready access to transit is baked into our local planning and we continue to support the Priority Development Areas (PDAs). There are now 17 PDAs in the County including five that were added in this cycle.
- Production Areas. The new designation of Priority Production Areas with locally identified industrial spaces for job growth recognizes the value of planning for job growth and the linkages to transit.
- Fix it first. SCTA supports prioritizing the maintenance of the existing transportation system. Our existing multi-use pathways, roads, and other transportation infrastructure are critical to ensuring mobility and access for all Sonoma County travelers today and into the future. Sonoma County provides access to diverse and valuable open space and recreation opportunities; maintaining our transportation system enables a broad cross-section of Bay Area residents to visit and enjoy these regional resources.
- Access. SCTA supports the PBA2050's emphasis on improving access to jobs and other destinations. All Sonoma County jurisdictions support city-centered growth policies and urban growth boundaries. A high proportion of Sonoma County residents live and work in the county (78%) and almost 90% of county trips stay in the county.
- Safety and Health. We support the focus on health and safety as proposed by the Complete Streets network and regional Vision Zero principles. In 2019, SCTA in partnership with the Sonoma County Department of Health Services, launched a countywide Vision Zero planning project. The Sonoma County Vision Zero project is gathering data and information to inform the development of a countywide action plan which is committed to achieving zero traffic deaths and severe injuries on Sonoma County roadways by 2035.
- Transit. SCTA supports a regional approach to transit recovery and aspirations to build a more robust system with enhanced frequency, reliability, capacity, and seamlessness. The SCTA adopted the Transit Integration and Efficiency Study (TIES) for our three local bus operators in 2019. In fall 2020, the SCTA established a Future of Transit Ad Hoc Committee to oversee implementation of TIES recommendations and coordination with regional transit integration efforts through the Blue Ribbon Transit Recovery Task Force. SCTA is pleased the enhancement of local bus service in Sonoma County is included explicitly in PBA2050.
- Resilience. The SCTA is pleased that PBA2050 recognizes the importance of State Route 37 as a vital corridor and of regional significance. Including the improvement project in the plan and providing regional discretionary funds is the right approach to ensuring this link across the North Bay is available into the future.

SCTA has concerns about how competing pressures and priorities are addressed in a few specific areas.

- Regional transit projects. Long distance commute trips in the North Bay deserve transit options. SCTA requests MTC reconsider the decision to exclude the SMART rail project north of Windsor to Healdsburg from the list of transportation projects. The SCTA support going north as its first priority for SMART expansion and going east to connect with the Capitol Corridor as a second priority. A funding partnership between Sonoma, Marin and MTC would allow for the northerly expansion to be a part of PBA2050 and a regional rail program for the North Bay could support the eastern extension. Failure to include the project will hinder SMART's ability to receive funding at a time when rail funds are a high priority at the State and federal levels.
- Rural communities. Rural communities represent a unique part of the nine-county region with distinct transportation and housing challenges. PBA2050 would be well served to acknowledge the role they play and the importance of community planning for smaller cities and towns.
- Technology. New technology and innovation have the potential to either enhance or put additional strain on our transportation systems. SCTA recommends that implementation of transportation technologies be guided and regulated to ensure that they are beneficial to mobility, safety, and access in Sonoma County and the region.
- Modeling and data. Regional modeling and analysis tools may not be appropriate for accurately assessing the many smaller scale and local benefits locally focused projects could provide.
- Voter priorities. SCTA highly values the coordination of regional and local visions. Most of the Bay Area counties, including Sonoma, have voter mandated transportation sales tax programs that specify local projects. It is imperative that MTC continue to recognize these priorities and support delivering on the promises made.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on the draft document. We greatly appreciate the effort put forth by you and your staff on this important document.

Sincerely,



[Susan Gorin \(Jul 19, 2021 10:35 PDT\)](#)

Susan Gorin, Chair
SCTA/RCPA