Working together to meet the Bay Area’s climate targets for transportation while improving health, equity and the economy
For fourteen years, organizations from across the Bay Area have come together with one voice to advocate for a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) that supports exceptional, affordable public transit and healthy, walkable communities. This platform of Strategic Investments for a Better Bay Area is a product of this coalition and collaboration, representing the views of dozens of non-governmental organizations throughout the Bay Area.

This Regional Transportation Plan is already new and different in significant ways from previous RTPs. The 2013 Regional Transportation Plan will be the first adopted in the Bay Area since the passage of SB375, California’s groundbreaking law that can fundamentally change the state’s paradigm of growth away from sprawling development, and back towards walkable communities with transportation options. The law’s centerpiece is the development of a “Sustainable Communities Strategy” (SCS). The Bay Area’s SCS—also known as “Plan Bay Area”— will detail a 25-year transportation investment, land use and housing scenario focused on reducing the amount people have to drive and associated greenhouse gas emissions.

But the recent economic downturn has brought challenges of a new scale. We have fewer resources and more needs than ever before. Our tremendous backlog to maintain our existing roads and public transit systems, our vision for infrastructure expansions, our desire for innovative programs, all vastly outstrip our ability to pay for them.

The $200+ billion worth of future transportation investments in Plan Bay Area are our region’s best opportunity to choose strategic investments to create a more livable Bay Area and reduce global warming pollution. Plan Bay Area also offers a chance to identify policies that can help guide these investments, such as rewarding cities that plan to accommodate much of the region’s future growth.

Strategic Investments for a Better Bay Area is a set of detailed recommendations for our region’s first Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), “Plan Bay Area.” Organizations across the Bay area have come together to articulate these policies and expenditure guidelines to ask that our region invest wisely now—for our future and our children’s future.

The full platform, starting on page two, includes greater detail on each of the four goals, ten objectives, and associated 27 specific investment and policy recommendations.
To fight climate change and improve the quality of life for all Bay Area residents, Plan Bay Area must:

**MAINTAIN WHAT WE ALREADY HAVE**

1. Make the region’s existing public transit system as reliable and affordable as possible by closing funding shortfalls to operate and maintain the system.

2. Maintain our local streets and roads for ALL users.

**CREATE WORLD CLASS TRANSIT FOR ALL**

3. Ensure low-income communities have access to mobility by closing identified gaps in bus routes and service and by funding high-priority projects in Community-Based Transportation Plans.

4. Achieve faster, more convenient and more reliable transit across the region by focusing on the most cost-effective projects to improve and expand the transit system, supporting projects with clear land use benefits and that can be funded and operated sustainably, so that the system meets the full range of needs of people who depend on transit.

**SUPPORT HEALTHY, WALKABLE, AFFORDABLE COMMUNITIES**

5. Support focused growth by creating a block grant program for Priority Development Areas, combining funds for planning, affordable housing, walkable and bikeable communities, and transportation demand management in these areas; and by supporting land conservation efforts in rural areas.

6. Make walking, bicycling, and travel by wheelchair safer and more convenient for all types of trips by funding all projects in the Regional Bicycle Network, extending funding for the Safe Routes to Schools and Safe Routes to Transit programs, and targeting them to areas of greatest need.

**GET THE PRICE RIGHT**

7. Reduce the cost of taking transit by getting free and discount transit passes to residents, students and employees.

8. Raise significant new funds to support a healthy, sustainable, affordable and equitable region.

9. Maximize the efficiency of the existing highway system through the implementation of a road pricing strategy that reduces congestion, reduces air pollution and global warming emissions, and funds transportation choices—not more highway capacity, and that decreases the overall costs of transportation for low-income commuters.

10. Extend the Transportation Climate Action Program to meet Greenhouse Gas (GHG) targets and increase efforts to bring successful pilot projects and programs to scale.

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**GET INVOLVED!**

Sign on to this platform, learn more, or download additional copies:

Visit [http://www.transformca.org/advocacy/scs-platform](http://www.transformca.org/advocacy/scs-platform)

Contact Jeff Hobson at jeff@transformca.org, or 510-740-3150 ext 312

*The Bay Area needs to come together to create a plan for a more sustainable and equitable Bay Area. We hope you will join us.*
OBJECTIVE 1

Make the region’s existing public transit system as reliable and affordable as possible by closing funding shortfalls to operate and maintain the system.

By increasing public transit ridership, we can reduce global warming pollution from driving, unclog our roads, and save taxpayers money. But this will happen only if transit is made reliable and affordable so that it meets the needs of everyone – especially seniors, persons with disabilities, and low-income families who rely heavily on transit.

Further, with the changing demographics in the Bay Area, the region’s transit operators need to be able to accommodate the shifting needs of the burgeoning aging and disabled population. Many accommodations needed are ones that will benefit all transit users, such as easy, frequent access to a well-connected transit system, affordable fares, clear signage, and easy-to-board transit vehicles. Some changes are of particular importance to seniors and the disabled, such as large print schedules and seating that accommodates people who use walkers and canes as well as wheelchairs. While MTC does not make these decisions, the transit agencies do, our transit systems need robust funding in order to provide these necessities for the Bay Area’s changing population.

Investing in transit is also essential to support our focused growth goals. This will in turn increase the number of places that are eligible for funding such as the federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit financing. This financing, which is crucial for the affordable housing construction, rewards projects that are near high-frequency train or bus stops.

With all these pressing needs, MTC should prioritize funding for shortfalls in the existing transit system. While both highway and transit expansions projects are politically popular, the Bay Area’s transit agencies have seen the shortfall to operate and maintain the existing system skyrocket. Keeping our transit system in good shape is vital to reducing greenhouse gas pollution.

The 2009 RTP covered $6.4 billion in maintenance, leaving $25 billion in shortfalls ($17 billion for capital maintenance and $8 billion for operations). This problem is so large that new revenues alone will not be able to bridge the funding gap. Rather, we need a host of solutions. MTC has initiated a Transit Sustainability Project (TSP) that is tasked to look at three primary ways to solve the transit fiscal crisis. The TSP is happening for a good reason; we need to implement changes to pull transit systems out of a potential death spiral. These may involve painful changes to major cost drivers, new revenue mechanisms, and/or better analysis of demands and service. The Transit Sustainability Project has the potential to help stabilize transit in the Bay Area and break the cycle of layoffs, service cuts and fare hikes that are now an annual event.

MTC must use the maximum flexibility available to cover these shortfalls. This may require funding swaps, as MTC and county agencies have used in the past to fill shortfalls in expansion projects. For example, MTC could use more federal surface transportation funds to maintain the existing system, freeing up other federal formula funds that can be used to run the transit system.

If MTC adopts a final 2013 RTP that does include transit shortfalls, the plan should also reflect the negative impact on long-term projections and outcomes. This should be done by modeling some combination of the service cuts, fare hikes, and physical disrepair that would likely result. Additionally, an inability to maintain our existing system would delay or prevent some of the largest expansion proposals, and that should also be reflected in the RTP.

MAINTAIN WHAT WE ALREADY HAVE

Recommendations to close the transit maintenance and operations shortfall:

1a) Identify what funding sources are truly flexible and can be put towards operations, focusing on ways to generate greatest ridership. This includes finding flexibility within county sales taxes and other sources.

1b) Provide as much funding as possible for maintaining the existing system.

1c) Prioritize funding in any new regional funding measure(s) towards maintenance and operations.

1d) Develop a package of improvements from the Transit Sustainability Project in time to consider as part of the RTP planning process.
OBJECTIVE 2
Maintain our local streets and roads for ALL users

“Fix it first” means we need to maintain our roads. All of us use our road network, whether we drive a car, ride a bus, or ride a bike. Many cash strapped cities and counties are falling farther behind on repair, which ultimately drives up repair costs as cracks turn into yawning potholes. However, it is increasingly unclear whether scarce regional discretionary funds should go towards this program, especially if the program is not focused in a way to achieve multiple benefits.

When the region invests its scarce discretionary funds in local streets and roads, these investments should further regional goals. Regional investments should support the focused growth embodied in the Priority Development Areas (PDAs) and also support efforts to promote the routine accommodation of bicyclists, pedestrians and wheelchair users in street projects. This “Complete Streets” approach, with the project checklists MTC and the counties have developed, will make it safer and easier for people who get around on foot, by wheelchair, and on bicycles.

Recommendations to target regional funding for local streets and roads (LSR) to achieve multiple goals:

2a) Direct LSR funds either primarily or exclusively to Priority Development Areas. Prioritize funds to jurisdictions on a performance basis, rewarding those that accept their fair share of housing at all income levels, prevent displacement, and include appropriate parking. Ensure funds are used equitably and effectively across modes and income levels.

2b) Direct LSR funds to streets with key bicycle and pedestrian improvement projects and prioritize funds to jurisdictions that are effectively implementing a “routine accommodation” policy.

NOTE: The section below on walkable, affordable neighborhoods (Objective 5) contains detailed recommendations about putting LSR funds into a PDA “block grant” that would also draw on other funding sources. See that section for details.
Public transportation is vital for all Bay Area residents; even people who don’t ride transit enjoy less congestion, cleaner air, and a variety of economic and social benefits. Public transportation is a fundamental lifeline for many of the 2.2 million Bay Area residents who do not own or drive a car -- primarily low-income households, the elderly, the disabled and the region’s youth.

As public transportation funding continues to be squeezed, the region will have to become more careful than ever about how we invest. Too often expensive expansions are based on polls and political power, not on cost-effectiveness or need. The region’s new performance-based approach, combined with our fiscal crisis, is a perfect opportunity to evaluate how to provide viable transit choices for those who need and use it most.

**OBJECTIVE 3**

**Ensure low-income communities have access to mobility by closing identified gaps in bus routes and service and by funding high-priority projects in Community-Based Transportation Plans.**

For many people in low-income communities, transit and other non-auto alternatives are a lifeline to access jobs, services, education, and health care. Our regional economy also benefits when all of our workers have reliable access to jobs. MTC’s Lifeline Transportation Program has supported recommendations identified in Community-Based Transportation Plans (CBTPs) for these low-income communities. These CBTPs were developed through a collaborative approach, including a local community group, to evaluate options and set priorities for filling essential transportation gaps. The 28 CBTPs identify community specific needs for fixed-route service as well as shuttles, information providers, and programs. The Lifeline program is funded by a combination of federal and state operating and capital funding sources, including federal Jobs Access and Reverse Commute Program, and state Proposition 1B. A funding cycle in 2009 funded 75 projects totaling more than $50 million.

To continue identifying needs as communities evolve, MTC needs to regularly update the analysis that sparked this Lifeline program. The “snapshot analysis” developed as part of the equity analysis of the last RTP can be a good basis for updating the estimates of needs. An improved snapshot analysis would have new data, at the neighborhood level, about socioeconomic status, transit availability and affordability, air quality, safety, housing affordability, and other indicators that can provide guides to ensure equitable transportation plans, policies, and investments.

Recommendations to ensure mobility options for low-income communities:

3a) Significantly increase funding for the Lifeline Transportation Program to address gaps in transit serving transit-dependent households and low-income areas, using cost estimates based on an updated “snapshot analysis.”

3b) Ensure funding for priority projects in Community-Based Transportation Plans by directing regional discretionary funds and updating the plans as necessary.

**NOTE:** Improvements in CBTPs may not show much, or any, reductions in GHG pollution in MTC’s model. This may be in part for technical reasons, such as limitations in data and modeling; or it may reflect the reality that in the short-term it primarily provides better access to people who are not switching out of vehicles. We believe that having strong transit and other mobility options so low-income communities get access to local and regional opportunities should be an end in itself. In the long run, this will help make it possible for more people to get around without owning a car.
OBJECTIVE 4

Achieve faster, more convenient and more reliable transit across the region by focusing on the most cost-effective projects to improve and expand the transit system, supporting projects with clear land use benefits and that can be funded and operated sustainably, so that the system meets the full range of needs of people who depend on transit.

To make transit faster, more convenient, and more reliable we need to expand and integrate our bus, rail, and ferry systems. However, since transit agencies are facing crushing deficits just to operate and maintain the existing transit system, high-priced system expansions require a whole new level of scrutiny. The region simply cannot afford all of the projects promised to voters as part of the sales taxes that passed from 2000-2004 and were included in MTC’s “Resolution 3434” package of transit expansions. That is why it will be critical to truly assess performance and focus on the most cost-effective improvements.

The Oakland Airport Connector is an example of the type of waste we cannot afford. It will require a subsidy of between $65 and $100 per rider (depending on your assumptions) for a short 3 mile ride to the airport parking lot, with no intermediate stops and thus no land use benefits. Counties and transit agencies should have to demonstrate sufficient funding for the construction, operations and maintenance of proposed expansions without negatively impacting existing service. This should include a clear and transparent financial analysis.
For a variety of reasons, including twin $6+ billion capital maintenance shortfalls, expensive BART and Muni extensions need the highest level of scrutiny. For example, BART to Livermore is a $3 billion project with no dedicated funding sources. While BART made the right decision to choose a station that would enhance the downtown and connect to ACE, the project is unaffordable. Instead, this RTP should analyze how to use the soon-to-open express lanes on I-580 to speed express buses directly to Dublin/Pleasanton BART.

Fortunately, there are cost-effective solutions to improving our transit systems. We can make transit faster, more convenient and more reliable, while also supporting the focused growth necessary to achieve the region’s ten goals.

There are a variety of “Transit Priority Measures” (sometimes called “rapid bus” improvements) that can speed buses through traffic, attracting riders while reducing per mile operating costs. Muni, VTA, AC Transit and other agencies now have strong plans to give transit priority on streets with new technology, traffic signal priority for transit, proof-of-payment systems, and to improve delivery of information to transit users. These improvements do not just increase transit service and ridership, they can also reduce operating costs per mile with increased speeds and efficiency. In an analysis for the 2009 RTP, no transit improvements had a higher Benefit/Cost ratio than Transit Priority Measures. Some of Muni’s improvements were funded through the Transportation Climate Action program. Several agencies have proposed “rapid bus” routes that rely on low-cost high-impact transit efficiency measures; these should be included in the RTP. Reduced operating costs should be calculated in the benefits of these programs.

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is another solution that can revolutionize Bay Area transit on a budget. The Bay Area is finally on the verge of getting true BRT routes which will dramatically increase the speed, reliability, and affordability of urban transit service in key corridors. Good BRT systems can build on “rapid bus” improvements and emulate many of the best features of rail, by using comfortable stations, and in most cases, dedicated bus lanes. While these projects should also have to go through the same performance assessment as other projects, they have typically scored very well in detailed local analyses and in regional evaluations.

For the long list of rail and ferry expansions the region promised in Resolution 3434, the region must undertake a clear-eyed performance assessment to figure out which projects have the greatest benefit and which ones we can truly afford. The projects that are most likely to score well are those that support areas that will see the most focused growth in homes and jobs and make the best use of the existing system, such as rail improvements that use standard gauge tracks. This analysis also needs to determine whether projects can be operated sustainably. That means not only that the new transit service can be operated without negative impacts on existing service operated by the same transit system, but also that the regional pool of operating funds available to other transit systems will not be adversely impacted. We cannot afford to repeat mistakes of the past: the region is still reeling from the negative financial impact of the BART-SFO expansion.

To ensure this focus on cost-effectiveness and performance continues beyond the RTP update, the region also needs to update and improve on the TOD policy adopted for the Resolution 3434 projects. This landmark policy stated that the region would only invest in transit expansion projects whose cities had planned for enough homes around the proposed stations. This has helped spur important planning for many neighborhoods, but we can do even more.

**Recommendations to achieve a faster, more convenient, and more reliable transit system:**

4a) Fund Transit Efficiency and Transit Priority Measures as a separate, competitive grant program, not just as an eligible category of the Transportation Climate Action Program.

4b) Ensure full funding for the major Rapid Bus and BRT projects proposed throughout the region and prioritize these projects in upcoming funding cycles.

4c) Re-evaluate all projects in Resolution 3434 to ensure they can be funded and operated sustainably, and represent the most cost-effective projects to meet MTC’s 10 adopted goals.

4d) Revise and expand the Resolution 3434 TOD policy to make it a better tool to encourage affordable housing and parking reform and encourage job growth in the right places.
OBJECTIVE 5

Support focused growth by creating a block grant program for Priority Development Areas, combining funds for planning, affordable housing, walkable and bikeable communities, and transportation demand management in these areas; and by supporting land conservation efforts in rural areas.

Sustainable Communities Strategies have two requirements. First, they must align transportation investments and policies with projected land uses to meet a GHG reduction target, if feasible. Second, they must accommodate future residents with housing developed within the region. Building new housing and focusing job growth near transit will help tackle the housing crisis, keep our economy competitive, improve public health, protect open space and maximize our return on investment in public transportation. MTC and ABAG have finally gotten traction with their focus on Priority Development Areas, which cities have voluntarily designated as the places where they want to have higher levels of job and/or housing growth. These areas must be both well planned and well-rewarded.

More compact, mixed-use development that supports active transportation modes such as walking, bicycling and transit demonstrates the many health benefits of giving the public more options for active mobility. In addition to reducing air pollution and its harmful effects on cardiovascular and respiratory health, such communities can encourage both children and adults to incorporate physical activity into everyday routines. Increased physical activity can reduce a number of chronic (and expensive) health risks such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease, cancer and depression. More compact, mixed-use development can also address quality of life inequities in low income communities and communities of color by increasing access to nutritious food, health care services, recreational facilities, affordable housing, and job opportunities which are often out of reach.

As we look to focus growth, it is absolutely critical to preserve and expand affordable housing and address the risk of displacement in neighborhoods targeted for TOD and compact development. Working families can greatly benefit from locating affordable housing options near transit and employment centers. Transportation and housing represent the largest share of household expenses for families. Affordable housing options near transit can greatly reduce these costs while providing a lifeline to jobs, education and services. Not only do low-income families benefit from reduced housing and transportation costs when affordable housing is located near transit, but reducing how much people drive decreases greenhouse gas emissions and improves public health.

Further, many cities currently require new developments to provide an excessive amount of new parking. These parking requirements increase the cost of housing, induce more driving, reduce the land available for economic development and public space, and reduce pedestrian safety. Excessive parking requirements can be reduced
OBJECTIVE 5 CONT.

with flexible parking standards in conjunction with a strong Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program.

Each of the Bay Area’s nine counties has a role to play in contributing to the long-term sustainability of our region. Some counties have cities with areas that are appropriate for accommodating new growth, while others have more natural resources to conserve, to ensure the preservation of their critical benefits for Bay Area residents. Greenprints recognize the contribution that habitat, parks, open space and farmland provide to the region’s quality of life, and set the stage for strategies to conserve those lands. Natural and agricultural land conservation will help our region meet our SB 375 emission reduction targets by focusing growth, transit and infrastructure in urban areas. Including a greenprint program in the SCS will allow the region to achieve sustainability goals around conservation as well as development. This program should be voluntary, similar to the Priority Development Areas, and build on the Priority Conservation Areas already identified through FOCUS. The regional agencies could assist by compiling a comprehensive summary of existing plans, GIS resources and other data to identify important natural, agricultural and recreational lands in the region as a resource to counties for developing local greenprints.

All of these changes will require planning and additional resources, and our financial constraints mean we must make sure to get the most bang for our regional buck. A regional block grant program could reward Priority Development Areas by combining discretionary regional funds for local streets and roads, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, and possibly other funds to counties and cities for use in PDAs. Funding criteria for this block grant program should be performance-based. Criteria could include: adoption of a housing element that conforms to the Regional Housing Needs Allocations that emerge from this Sustainable Communities Strategy; adoption of policies and programs to preserve existing affordable homes and prevent displacement of low-income residents; and implementation of policies to reform parking requirements. Since the block grant will includes funds that were previously dedicated to particular purposes (bicycle/pedestrian improvements, land use planning, local street repair, etc.), it will also need to ensure that an adequate portion of the resulting block grants goes to each purpose.

NOTE: The recommendations in this platform focus on leveraging transportation funds. In addition, land use and housing policies and projections in the SCS scenarios are vital and will be addressed by additional recommendations from a Land Use Working Group coordinated by Greenbelt Alliance.”

Recommendations to support focused growth:

5a) Reward PDAs by creating a block grant program that combines funds for local streets and roads, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, and possibly other funds to counties for use in PDAs. Funding rules and criteria should be performance-based, reward cities that accept their fair share of housing at all income levels, prevent displacement, and reform parking, and ensure funds are used equitably and effectively across modes and income levels.

5b) Increase support for land use-related programs, including:

• MTC’s popular Transportation for Livable Communities capital grant program.

• The new Transit-Oriented Affordable Housing Fund, which MTC had a critical role in establishing.

• The Station Area Planning grant program that funds city-sponsored planning efforts for neighborhoods around transit stations. These grants should require neighborhoods to include an assessment of opportunities for affordable housing, include plans for housing stability to avoid displacement, and have an assessment of opportunities to improve health through strategies such as bicycle and pedestrian facilities and access to health services.

• A new program to help cities establish more flexible parking requirements. This grant program should be large enough to give grants of up to $500,000 so cities can complete the detailed studies necessary to develop well-tailored policies.

5c) Create a new, voluntary, incentive-based grant program to allow counties to develop greenprints showing a long-term vision for how to conserve natural resource areas and working farms, and strategies to implement those visions.

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OBJECTIVE 6

Make walking, bicycling, and travel by wheelchair safer and more convenient for all types of trips by funding all projects in the Regional Bicycle Network, extending funding for the Safe Routes to Schools and Safe Routes to Transit programs, and targeting them to areas of greatest need.

Walking and bicycling are possible year-round in the Bay Area, affordable for everyone, and emissions-free. This makes increasing these mode shares an essential and achievable part of combating global warming while helping to significantly improve physical activity and reduce skyrocketing chronic disease rates. For our growing population of seniors and people with disabilities, as well as many low-income families, this “non-motorized” transportation is vital.

“Active transportation” is also the healthiest way to get around, which is why one of the region’s goals is to double the amount of time Bay Area residents spend walking or bicycling for everyday transportation. This goal should be achievable: 20% of all trips made in California are less than one mile in length. Helping more people walk, bicycle, and get around in wheelchairs requires infrastructure and education to support more, and safer, walking and bicycling.

Safe Routes to Schools (SR2S) is a proven approach to getting more children safely walking and bicycling to school. The program engages the entire school community in safety education, fostering safer driving near schools and improving local pedestrian/bicycle infrastructure. MTC’s Transportation Climate Action Program is now funding Safe Routes to School programs until 2013, with a first cycle of funding that provided $17 million for the first two years. This program needs to be extended at or above the current level of funding as we get results from these programs and better understand how to target program activities.

The Regional Bicycle Network identifies the bicycle routes and facilities still needed so that Bay Area residents can fully access the region’s major businesses, activity centers, and transit hubs on bicycle. The RTP should designate full funding to fill these gaps. Additionally, the RTP revision should further explore how education and advocacy can increase cycling’s overall mode share. Once MTC makes a commitment in the RTP, actual allocations need to keep pace. The 2009 RTP designated $2 billion for the Regional Bicycle Plan, leaving a $500 million need, but actual allocations have been less than proportional over the past two years.

Recommendations to make walking and bicycling safer and more convenient:

6a) The RTP should fill gaps in the bicycle route network and provide funding for bicycle facilities to increase the mode share of bicycle trips in the Bay Area.

6b) Funding should be continued for the Safe Routes to School and Safe Routes to Transit programs, at or above current funding levels.

DISCLAIMER: Various organizations that have long supported and advocated for these bicycle and pedestrian safety programs are now helping to implement these programs, especially Safe Routes to School. Also, the East Bay Bicycle Coalition and Transform proposed SR2T as part of Regional Measure 2. Transform has administered the biannual SR2T competitive grant program, with MTC actually doing the allocations. This recommendation does not imply Transform would necessarily continue administering SR2T.
OBJECTIVE 7

Reduce the cost of taking transit by getting free and discount transit passes to residents, students and employees.

The region invests considerable funding to provide public transit service. Now we need to focus on ways to promote it and make it easier and cheaper to ride. One way to accomplish all of these goals is through free or discount transit passes. If done right these passes could leverage private funding, reduce the cost of transportation for people who need transit the most, and provide stable revenues for transit agencies. Transit passes can also build long-term ridership by familiarizing new riders with local transit systems.

There won’t be one single approach to promote the widespread adoption of free and discount transit passes. Some transit agencies, such as VTA and AC Transit, are making it easier with annual “Eco-passes” that can be purchased at a discount if given to all employees, residents, or students at a particular site. Colleges and universities are finding ways to provide passes to all students and sometimes staff. The City of Berkeley provides passes to all employees. Muni and the San Francisco Human Services Agency have teamed up to create a discounted “Lifeline” pass for low-income residents. While such programs have huge benefits, administrative and other costs can be barriers, especially to initiate the programs. The increasing availability of electronic fare payment systems, such as MTC’s Clipper card, should help overcome those barriers.

Recommendations to reduce the cost of taking transit:

7a) Fund a program for transit agencies to work with community groups, school districts, businesses, developers and government agencies to provide free or deeply discounted youth bus passes. The cost of bus passes poses a significant barrier to student achievement and will achieve the biggest impact if tailored for low-income students.

7b) Provide funding to assist public sector organizations and private sector employers that want to establish or better evaluate transit pass programs.
OBJECTIVE 8

Raise significant new funds to support a healthy, sustainable, affordable and equitable region.

We must act quickly and boldly to address our region’s immense challenges. As mentioned above, the region’s current level of transportation funding is not sufficient to maintain and operate our existing transit or road system. Even worse, many of the current revenue sources are declining.

For many cities, lack of funding is also a barrier to meeting the ambitious goals for affordable housing embodied in the Regional Housing Needs Allocation. To meet our housing needs and greenhouse gas reduction goals, the region needs more homes affordable to low- and moderate-income households. That means we need to support cities’ efforts to provide those homes. A new, dedicated regional funding source, possibly based on a document recording fee or real estate transfer tax, would invest in meeting the region’s long-term housing need and short-term Regional Housing Needs Allocation at all income levels.

Proposition 26 will make it harder to give voters the choices they deserve to fund new projects and programs with a majority vote, but not impossible.

Recommendations to raise new funding:

8a) Work together to get statutory authority for MTC (and other MPOs in the state) to bring vehicle registration or vehicle fuel fees to voters, to be used in support of the Sustainable Communities Strategy and meeting MTC’s 10 adopted goals. This authority should require an equity analysis that shows greater benefits than costs for low-income communities.

8b) Bring a measure to Bay Area voters in 2012 that includes significant funding for transit operations and maintenance and other strategies that could meet the region’s 10 adopted targets for the SCS, while conforming to Proposition 26’s requirements.

8c) Bring together regional agencies, local governments, business groups, and affordable housing advocates to plan for a dedicated regional funding source that is sufficient to invest in producing the region’s housing need at all income levels.
OBJECTIVE 9

Maximize the efficiency of the existing highway system through the implementation of a road pricing strategy that reduces congestion, reduces air pollution and global warming emissions, and funds transportation choices, not more highway capacity, and that decreases the overall costs of transportation for low-income commuters.

Road pricing offers a range of proven ways for the region to get the most out of our current highway system and improve transportation for everyone, from solo drivers to transit riders.

MTC has proposed an “Express Lane” or High-Occupancy Toll (HOT) lane system throughout the Bay Area. The system would allow single-occupancy vehicles to enter High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes if drivers pay a toll. Prices would be set to keep traffic, including express buses, flowing freely in the lanes. Santa Clara VTA is already leading the way with the development of several express lanes.

Many organizations opposed MTC’s proposal for an 800-mile Express lane network because it would have committed no funding to transit, and it expanded highways at the gateways of our region, increasing driving and undermining the goals of SB 375. MTC is now considering a smaller network focused more on conversions of existing HOV lanes.

MTC should not focus the design of the system around maximizing its length, but rather on its outcomes. The real question is how can we design an Express Lane system that helps the region meet the 10 adopted goals, including meeting GHG targets and reducing the cost of transportation for low-income commuters. Designing the system properly would mean focusing on conversion of existing lanes that can bring in significant net revenue, so that expanded public transit and vanpooling options can be provided on day one.

To draw widespread support Express lanes will have to show they can reduce congestion, reduce global warming pollution, fund transportation choices, and decrease the overall costs of transportation for low-income commuters.

Recommendations to maximize the efficiency of the existing highway system:

9a) Direct net revenues raised by Express Lanes to provide new transit alternatives, and promote carpooling and vanpooling along those corridors. These changes should be made at the beginning of the program and in the same corridor that produced the revenue.

9b) Decrease the overall cost of transportation to low-income commuters through transit fare passes and subsidies, free or discount use of the lanes at certain times, or other mechanisms.

9c) Do not include the expansions of Hwy-101, I-580, or I-80 to neighboring regions that were included in the 2009 RTP. These expansions go against the intent of SB 375, to focus resources on residents of our region instead of supporting even more in-commuters.

9d) On highways with at least 8 mixed-flow lanes but no HOV lane – such as I-880 in Oakland, Hwy-101 in San Mateo and Highway 24 in Contra Costa and Alameda counties --- evaluate converting an existing lane in each direction to an Express Lane. Include these conversions in the RTP if they will create net revenues and support the region’s 10 goals.
OBJECTIVE 10
Extend the Transportation Climate Action Program to meet Greenhouse Gas (GHG) targets and increase efforts to bring successful pilot projects and programs to scale.

As part of the 2009 RTP, MTC created a first-in-the-nation regional Transportation Climate Action Program. The program is focused on funding breakthrough techniques for reducing GHG emissions and vehicle-miles traveled. The first round of funding included:
• Safe Routes to Schools funding for all nine counties
• Transit Priority Programs
• Innovative Grants Program that funded demonstration projects
• An education and marketing program

An evaluation component will help identify strategies that can most effectively reduce GHG emissions. To retain support, the program needs to ensure its investments advance the region’s 10 goals for the RTP/SCS and particularly support efforts to improve communities that most bear the brunt of pollution. An important element, that should receive increased focus in future investments of this program, is widespread use of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs to make more efficient use of the transportation network.

Recommendations on extending the Transportation Climate Action Program:

10a) Extend the climate program and bring to scale some of the programs that had been identified as most successful at reducing GHG emissions, while meeting MTC’s other adopted goals.

10b) Work with the Bay Area Air Quality Management District to identify communities that have the highest exposure to air pollution, and focus a portion of funds to reduce these disparate impacts.

Photo: SFBC Operations
Platform Development Process and Acknowledgements

Strategic Investments for Plan Bay Area was developed by TransForm and dozens of nonprofits working together to ensure the Bay Area’s first Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) helps us fight climate change while winning a better Bay Area. These groups have been coming together as the “Bay Area SCS Partners.”

The Platform also includes strategic investments put forward by a Transportation Working Group convened by TransForm and a Land Use Working Group convened by Greenbelt Alliance, and feedback from over 20 groups or individuals responding to an initial draft circulated in early March 2011.

About TransForm
TransForm works to create world-class public transportation and walkable communities in the Bay Area and beyond. We build diverse coalitions, influence policy, and develop innovative programs to improve the lives of all people and protect the environment.

Support
TransForm’s Bay Area transportation advocacy is supported by citizen supporters of TransForm’s Advocates’ Fund as well as by grants from the following foundations:
- The California Endowment
- Firedoll Foundation
- Ford Foundation
- Kaiser Permanente Community Benefits Program
- Resources Legacy Fund
- Richard & Rhoda Goldman Fund
- The San Francisco Foundation
- Silicon Valley Community Foundation
- Surdna Foundation
- Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation
- William & Flora Hewlett Foundation

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