



February 17, 2012

Chair Jim Spring and Members of the Planning Committee  
Metropolitan Transportation Commission  
101 8<sup>th</sup> Street  
Oakland CA 94607

**Re: Planning Committee item #2, on Project Performance Assessment**

Dear Commissioners,

As you move towards a “preferred scenario” for Plan Bay Area you are being presented a groundbreaking Project Performance Assessment (PPA) that represents an excellent attempt to connect the 10 RTP targets that were adopted last year to specific investments. TransForm has been active throughout this PPA, including as a member of the technical advisory committee.

This letter outlines positive aspects of the PPA, some of its shortcomings and our recommendations for including or excluding specific projects from the final preferred scenario. These issues and recommendations are covered in much more detail in the accompanying position paper.

This PPA was a dramatic improvement over the 2009 assessment. MTC staff was highly receptive to feedback, more transparent, and more forthcoming about shortcomings of the PPA. But any analysis based on a travel model, insufficient data and a certain amount of subjectivity will have shortcomings. In particular, we would like to highlight three shortcomings we believe need to be considered as you apply the PPA to final project selection.

1. **The B/C ratio likely overstates the long-term congestion reduction benefits of major highway and suburban transit projects.** The B/C ratio does not reflect the loss of congestion relief over time due to changes in travel behavior and induced growth. (Note: we recognize it would have been too resource- and time-intensive to overcome this shortcoming).
2. **The B/C ratio understates the land use benefits of transit projects that serve walkable compact communities.** Since land use is kept static in the model, there is no benefit of increased ridership for areas that are likely to develop more intensive land uses.
3. **The sensitivity analysis that reduces the value of vehicle and truck travel time savings probably provides a more accurate B/C ratio for many projects.** MTC staff ran sensitivity analyses that decreased the value of travel time saving. We feel the 50% decrease scenario better reflects the value of large road and public transportation projects.

**TransForm Project Recommendations**

Based on the PPA, we want to draw your attention to three projects that we recommend should be excluded from the 2013 RTP plus a host of “slam dunk” projects that we feel should definitely be included. This list is not intended to be a comprehensive set of TransForm’s recommendations for the RTP. Some other projects, such as the Express Lane Network, require more discussion and nuance than is possible here. We have long supported many MTC’s regional programs such as Lifeline, Transportation for Livable Communities, etc, and we continue to do so in this RTP. Rather, these recommendations focus on projects that we feel may have been over- or under-valued in the PPA, and that we strongly recommend should be included or excluded based on that analysis.

**1. Exclude: SR 239 Expressway Construction (Brentwood to Tracy)**

This project has a large negative impact on the targets (negative 3.5), relies on overstated travel time savings and is too early in planning, with potentially large impacts, to include in this RTP.

**2. Exclude: BART to Livermore (Phase 1: 1 station extension with Bus Enhancements)**

**3. Include: I-580 Express Bus (Dublin to Livermore)**

The BART extension has a B/C ratio of just 1, and falls below that in the 50% sensitivity analysis. It will induce additional long-distance car trips and growth since 2/3 of projected riders are from San Joaquin County. And a highway median station will have a hard time complying with MTC's TOD Policy. The I-580 Express Bus is more cost-effective (B/C ratio of 2). BART will soon conduct a project-level study for this corridor.

**4. Exclude: Marin-Sonoma Narrows (Phase 2: HOV Lanes)**

**5. Include: SMART (Phase 2: Extensions to Cloverdale & Larkspur)**

This expansion of US 101 barely escaped scrutiny by scoring a 1.0 on the B/C ratio. But this project would certainly induce additional trips in the short and mid-term, and through induced growth in the long-term, which would reduce the B/C ratio considerably. Instead, the RTP should include funding to upgrade of the Narrows to a freeway, correct operational deficiencies, and build queue jump access for HOVs from both the North and South. Phase 2, to complete the SMART system, should be included. Even though it scored a 0.7 on the B/C ratio it would score much higher if the land use changes were able to be modeled.

**6. Include: BART Metro Program. Which had the highest B/C ratio in the PPA.**

**7. Include: Fairfield/Vacaville Capital Corridor Station**

**8. Include: Union City Commuter Rail Station (Amtrak and potentially Dumbarton)**

Because the model held land use constant, with or without these stations, it undervalues the likelihood for greater Transit-oriented Development. Such TOD is already underway in Union City and is in the Fairfield General Plan.

**9. Include: Innovative San Francisco projects with very high B/C ratios**

- a. Treasure Island Congestion Pricing,
- b. SFMTA Transit Effectiveness Project and
- c. Better Market Street

**10. Include: Cost-effective Bus Rapid Transit projects that have the potential to greatly increase transit speeds for existing and new riders.**

- a. VTA and Samtrans El Camino BRT: likely undervalued in B/C ratio as walkable compact communities are being planned along El Camino.
- b. Geary and Van Ness BRT (San Francisco)
- c. AC Transit: East Bay BRT (Oakland and San Leandro), Alameda-Oakland BRT, and Grand-MacArthur BRT

Thank you for your efforts to develop Plan Bay Area. We look forward to your discussion about how to use the Project Performance Assessment and to further opportunities to comment on the development of the preferred transportation scenario.

Sincerely,



Stuart Cohen  
Executive Director



Jeff Hobson  
Deputy Director