



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE BAY AREA  
An Inter-League Organization of the San Francisco Bay Area



April 19, 2010

Mr. Scott Haggerty, Chair, and Commission Members  
Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC)  
101 Eighth Street  
Oakland, CA 94607

Dear Mr. Haggerty,

The following preliminary comments on MTC's ongoing work to update the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) reflect the convictions of the League of Women Voters nation-wide that global climate change is an urgent, serious threat to the environment, health, and economy of our nation. We understand that MTC shares this point of view with us, and our comments are intended to strengthen and enhance our common efforts.

In this spirit, we urge MTC to recommit to the intention expressed in the current RTP to "Lead the charge on climate protection," and to set goals for the RTP update to reflect the specifications of SB 375 for a reduction in GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. This goal would be commensurate with the 40% of the Bay Area's total GHG emissions that are contributed by cars and light trucks.

In the past, despite many commendable intentions, the regional plan updates have not met MTC's own goals for reducing transportation-related emissions. One important reason for this remains: the practice of committing RTP funds years into the future, so that as much as 80% of funding for any RTP is unavailable to meet current and new challenges. To help restore MTC's flexibility in planning, we urge a review of all committed projects that have not broken ground. Those that will not help reduce our carbon footprint should be seriously considered for elimination or postponement.

MTC's work with other Bay Area regional agencies to ensure compact, transit-oriented development in the Bay Area is a positive and commendable contribution to our future well-being. Our concern is that many of the priority areas chosen for new development are far from central Bay Area job locations. We have two questions about these plans: *What assessments will you make to ensure that the residents of the planned developments will not be forced to make long commute trips to reach jobs suitable for them? Do you intend to evaluate the capacity and flexibility of transit services available to the residents to ensure they will be likely to choose transit for commute trips?*

While the land use emphasis for the upcoming RTP is a reason for optimism, it is useful to recognize that significant results will be realized slowly and are probably decades away. At the same time, we expect that gains in reducing transportation-related

emissions will occur steadily as a result of new technologies and fuel efficiencies. It is unlikely, however, that technology alone will be able to offset expected increases in driving. Therefore, a focus on reducing GHGs by changing travel behavior and reducing VMT is needed.

It seems unlikely that VMT reductions will occur without changes in funding priorities during the next decade, since transit agencies are being forced to make cuts in their routes and services and to raise fares, and as BART has attested, they will not have the capacity to serve the ridership assumed for them in the current RTP. Although a majority of funds in the RTP are devoted to transit, these funds go in large part to major capital improvements for new stations, new equipment, new parking lots, and new modes of travel. While some of these additions may, in the long run, be cost-effective, all should be evaluated to determine the ratio of their costs to their benefits, all weighed against the need to cut GHGs. It may be that providing operating funds for increased transit services would better serve many of the RTP goals.

The serious needs of all transit operators for operating funds call for focused efforts to identify funding for good transit services not only to commuters but also to serve day-to-day needs for non-commute trips that make up the bulk of travel. RTP priorities need to be adjusted with a focus on these trips and on service to people dependent on transit.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this on-going planning process.

Sincerely,

Marion Taylor  
Vice-President, Program and Advocacy

CC: Steve Heminger, Anne Flemer, Doug Kimsey