



NORTHERN NEWS



A Publication of the Northern Section of the California Chapter of APA



American Planning Association
California Chapter
Northern

Making Great Communities Happen

JULY/AUGUST 2011

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SCS—What's the big idea?

Moving toward adoption in 2013, the Bay Area Sustainable Communities Strategy will change where our cities grow

By Naphtali H. Knox, FAICP, Editor

The Bay Area's Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) is moving forward. Unlike previous Bay Area visioning and scenarios, the SCS has the force of law behind it and is on schedule to be adopted in 2013.

People are paying attention; anxiety is up. What's going to happen to us, and when? What do we know, and what can we expect?

California's SB 375 (2008) mandated the creation of sustainable regional growth plans with the primary objective of reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) in California. As required by the new law, the California Air Resources Board gave each metropolitan planning organization (MPO) a GHG target for cars, to be achieved through changes in overall land use patterns. The law also required that the SCS provide housing for all income groups by incorporating the Regional Housing Need Allocation (RHNA) prepared periodically for Housing Element preparation.

About 80 city and county planners gathered in Nile Hall in Oakland's Preservation Park on June 3rd for a Bay Area Planning Directors Association (BAPDA) meeting to hear about the Bay Area SCS now being drafted to meet the requirements of SB 375. Cosponsored by APA California–Northern, the half-day meeting offered an opportunity for city, county, and congestion management agency planning directors to comment on the Initial Vision Scenario (IVS) released in March. (Attendees can claim 3 AICP/CM credits at www.planning.org/cm/log/)

ABAG Planning Director Ken Kirkey, AICP, and MTC Planning Director Doug Kimsey gave an overview of the next steps in the SCS, the tie-in to the Regional Housing Need Allocation (RHNA) and the Regional Transportation Improvement Plan (RTIP) processes, implementation issues, and environmental review.

Mill Valley Planning Director and BAPDA Chair Michael Moore, AICP, introduced the presenters. Bruce Riordan of Elmwood Consulting facilitated a Q&A; and Benicia Public Works & Community Development Director Charlie Knox, AICP, moderated a panel of six local agency planners.

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SCS—What's the big idea? *(continued from previous page)*

Several planners said they were cheered that progress is being made in getting the regional plan-makers to not only listen, but to hear the locals and respond thoughtfully. The PowerPoint presentation by Ken Kirkey and Doug Kimsey can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/qo9LDP>.

A few of the major points

- The IVS of March 2011 steers 70 percent of growth to priority development areas (PDAs).
- Equity, CEQA, jobs/housing benefit and fit, and local and regional economic development all need attention.
- The Regional Transportation Plan, which is folded into the IVS, shows a 2035 allocation in which 81 percent of the money goes to maintaining and operating existing systems. It is a “fix-it-first” plan.
- The SCS timeline calls for approval of a preferred scenario by February 2012, followed by environmental impact review and adoption of a final SCS by 2013.

Charlie Bryant, AICP, Emeryville: Every MPO in the state is doing it's own forecasting. At the same time, the state's RHNA is being prepared as a top-down forecast and is driving everything in the SCS.

- **Ken Kirkey:** Most Bay Area cities are overzoned for jobs and commercial space. That said, the job growth projected in the IVS, based on the RHNA and local zoning, is too high compared to regional job growth over the past two decades. While the RHNA goes out eight years, the SCS horizon is nearly three times as long. What is consistent between the forecasts is the pattern of land use development.
- From 1997-2009, there was almost a complete lack of production of moderate income housing in the Bay Area's core cities. At the same time, a lot of such housing was built in the suburbs.
- SB 375 requires a realistic development forecast. Of the five Bay Area SCS scenarios being developed, one—the “core concentration”—will meet both the GHG and housing targets. The time required to do that, however, may be problematic. San Diego extended the time frame for its SCS/RTP, the first to be adopted in the state, to 2060.

Counties and cities weigh in

Hillary Gitelman, Napa County: “What is the role of a rural county in our region?” Napa County has 10 percent of the region's land area, 2 percent of the jobs, and 2 percent of the population. The HCD model of affordable housing at 20 dwelling units per acre doesn't work in Napa, and the job projections are unrealistically high. Our local officials are focused on controlling the RHNA in a way that will preserve the agricultural productivity and nature of the county. (Presentation at <http://bit.ly/mT3MgT>)

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The American Planning Association, California Chapter Northern, offers membership to city and regional planners and associated professionals primarily living or working in California, from Monterey County to Del Norte County, including the nine county San Francisco Bay Area and Lake and San Benito Counties. APA California Northern promotes planning-related continuing education and social functions in order to:

- Provide an arena for communication and exchange of information about planning related activities;
- Raise member awareness and involvement in APA affairs;
- Increase public awareness of the importance of planning;
- Encourage professionalism in the conduct of its members; and
- Foster a sense of community among the members.

APA California Northern publishes *Northern News* 10 times each year in PDF for the exchange of planning ideas and information. Current and back issues are available for download at <http://bit.ly/9YpPxS>. Entirely the effort of volunteers, the *News* is written and produced by and for urban planners in Northern California. Circulation (downloads per issue) averages 6,000.

Northern News welcomes comments. Letters to the editor require the author's first and last name, home or work street address and phone number (neither of which will be published), and professional affiliation or title (which will be published only with the author's permission). All letters are subject to editing. Letters over 250 words are not considered.

Deadlines for submitting materials for inclusion in *Northern News* range from the 12th to the 16th of the month prior to publication. The 2011 schedule can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/dHlgyM>.

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SCS—What's the big idea? (continued from previous page)

Tilly Chang, San Francisco County Transportation Authority: Transportation is the key issue; congestion impedes growth. The SCS hinges on interaction and connectivity among all Bay Area communities. (Presentation at <http://bit.ly/im5t7y>)

Beth Walukas, Alameda County Transportation Commission: We have different cities with different land use patterns and competing needs, and 36 PDAs. The county must weigh transportation needs against other needs that are at capacity and underfunded. (Presentation at <http://bit.ly/jzqILm>)

Aaron Aknin, AICP, San Bruno: San Mateo County and almost all of its cities find the housing numbers are simply too high. As a result of various constraints (small lot sizes, multiple owners) even cities that have been very aggressive in promoting housing production are not even close to the IVS numbers. The rate of housing growth assumed by the IVS is unachievable from a market standpoint. A realistic figure based on the historic growth rate is needed. San Mateo County cities are also concerned about the job growth figures, although several stated they could accommodate more job growth than contemplated in the IVS. (Presentation at <http://bit.ly/qF5CcY>)

James Lindsay, Milpitas. Planning for adequate school capacity, parkland, and utility infrastructure is key to developing quality infill communities. The IVS assumes household growth rates twice those of historic growth rates for Santa Clara County cities. The assumed rates are unrealistic given local constraints to infill development—constraints that need to be acknowledged in the SCS alternative and preferred scenarios. Work on the new RHNA methodology should be delayed to coincide with development of the Preferred Scenario. (Presentation at <http://bit.ly/og7KCV>)

Bob Brown, AICP, San Rafael, characterized the SCS as "RHNA on steroids." Because San Rafael has the only two PDAs in the county, the city is being asked to take at least half of Marin County's allocated housing growth—nearly 1 percent of the region's growth. (Presentation at <http://bit.ly/npHYFv>)

Land use patterns will take decades to change before they can have any effect on GHG emissions. It would be more effective to establish pricing mechanisms upfront.

Beth Walukas: The legislation is clear that land use control resides locally.

Hillary Gitelman: The jobs/housing balance is simplistic and won't really reduce vehicle trips in the real world. Napa County as a whole is in balance, but there is significant in- and out-commute traffic.

Local agency directors respond

Laurel Prevetti, San José: The IVS fails to recognize the fine grain diversity of communities; one size does not fit all. The San José jobs/housing ratio is 0.8. We're the tenth largest city in the country, and more residents commute out to work than in any US city in the top 20.

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SCS—What's the big idea? *(continued from previous page)*

Dan Marks, AICP, Berkeley: The PDA numbers are inexcusably high. If we can't accommodate the growth assigned to the PDAs, where will it go?

Hillary Gitelman: The RHNA is required to be consistent with the SCS, yet only two of the five SCS options will meet the outsized housing numbers.

Ken Kirkey, ABAG: We can't adopt the housing distribution—as we must, across incomes and in PDAs—if constraints indicate that production can't be implemented. The RHNA will have to be consistent with the realistic (constrained) SCS.

Martin Engelmann, Contra Costa Transportation Authority:

The SCS only deals with 10 percent of all GHG emissions.

Doug Kimsey, MTC: As we move away from the IVS—which has been characterized as extremely aggressive—we lower the percentage of GHG reduced.

Winston Rhodes, AICP, Pinole: How might economic changes affect housing ownership, household size, and dwelling unit size?

Ken Kirkey: A better question is whether we will kill off job growth if we don't offer easier access between jobs and housing.

Alex Amoroso, AICP, Berkeley: Is there a need for better marketing in speaking to our publics?

Ken Kirkey: It's important to get some numbers out there, and the IVS did that. But the more we talk about places—and about places getting better—the better the conversation will be. ■

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

By Hanson Hom, AICP



The Board recently approved several expenditures that further the ambitious goals the Board established at its annual retreat in January. First, the Board committed to promoting professional development and APA membership among planning students and young professionals, especially during these difficult economic times. This July, the Board agreed to provide supplemental financial assistance to five Northern Section planners applying to take the AICP exam. This is in response to a large number of planners, many from the Northern Section, who applied to the California Chapter under a program to reduce the exam registration fee for planners who demonstrated financial hardship.

A second initiative approved by the Board in July provides funds to partially cover travel expenses for a team of two professors and four graduate planning students from San Jose State University to travel to Biloxi, Mississippi, later this year to prepare a *Post-Katrina Economic Development and Housing Assessment Plan*. The team will work with Hope CDA, a local nonprofit, to address business development, waterfront revitalization and land use for a community still recovering from the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. This financial support also furthers a Board goal to strengthen our partnership with the academic planning community. The SJSU team is committed to organizing a local AICP | CM workshop following preparation of the plan and will write an article for Northern News to highlight the planning effort.

Another Board goal for 2011 is to enhance the Northern Section's website www.norcalapa.org for APA members and to expand the effective use of social media such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter. The Board adopted an initial social media policy to guide the use of these mediums for membership information and interaction. With the resignation of the Section's long-time web designer, **Audrey Feely**, the Board expects to have a new web designer on Board very soon to manage the Section's website. We are taking this opportunity to look at our site and to make it more dynamic, useful, and easier to navigate. Members are highly encouraged to submit suggestions to our Board Webmasters, **Pierce MacDonald** and **Ronny Kraft**, for improving and redesigning the site.

The Board continues to offer a variety of free or low-cost local workshops and informational sessions for AICP | CM credits—a priority goal of the Board. Please check the calendar of events in

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Northern News or on the Section's website for upcoming events. Note the free workshop, "Energy Basics for Planner"—a timely event sponsored by Northern Section July 28 at the MetroCenter in Oakland. (See [page 24](#).) Thanks to **Josh Hohn** for organizing the session. We expect it will lead to creating a working group of planners and energy experts to further explore the topic.

Finally, much appreciation and best wishes to Board Directors who have recently moved on: **Mika Miyasoto, AICP**, Newsletter Associate Editor; **Hannah Young, AICP**, Advertising Director; **Surachita Bose, AICP**, Peninsula RAC Chair; and **Sara Billing, Student Representative (SJSU)**. And a hearty welcome to our newly appointed Directors: **Erik Balsley, AICP**, newsletter Associate Editor; **Scott Davidson, AICP**, Advertising Director; **James A. Castañeda, AICP**, Peninsula RAC Chair; and **David Keyon, AICP**, Student Representative, SJSU (see profiles on [page 13](#)). ■

Where in the world?



Photo by Linton Atlas (Answer on [page 9](#))



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Plan-it sustainably

By Scott T. Edmondson, AICP, and Katja Irvin, AICP

Northern Section-SFSU client project: Leveraging the leading edge of sustainability

Sustainability planning is everywhere these days; but where is the leading edge of sustainable community planning and how can we leverage it to enhance our own initiatives? This core question captured the imagination of three graduating seniors in SFSU's Urban Studies and Planning Program.

The *Sustainability Committee/SFSU student collaboration* launched the Committee's research program. Exploring leading edge sustainability planning cases and assembling an initial set of useful resources was the objective. As Albert Einstein said, "Setting an example is not the main means of influencing others; it is the only means." However, which examples are worth emulating?

Scott pitched the initial concept to the class, and the project developed in three phases.

- (1) A week of self-training in strategic sustainability planning frameworks;
- (2) a survey and assessment of international "benchmark" cases; and
- (3) an exploration and profile of Northern Section cases. These phases illuminate the state of sustainability planning and provide leading edge examples to explore and model.

The final SFSU report includes three overarching recommendations. Although one agency, initiative, or jurisdiction cannot implement them alone, they provide insight that can stimulate innovation in our own initiatives. The team concluded that, "beyond the fundamental need for every plan to be developed using a strategic framework" and using science-based sustainability success principles, three other characteristics contributed to success.

First—plan in context, not in isolation: Effective sustainability planning cannot exist on a city-by-city basis, but must be addressed holistically, in a closed loop, cradle-to-cradle approach to urban metabolism—as an "organic whole" says Timothy Beatley in *Green Urbanism*. That implies a new system of metropolitan planning and governance capable of a fresh approach to urban, suburban, rural, and natural systems issues alike. In 1991, New Zealand reorganized its governance and planning along bioregional watershed boundaries with great success. <http://bit.ly/njN18Q>

Implication: View jurisdictional environmental quality and economic prosperity as the product of interrelationship with the larger region, not simply the product of isolated, jurisdiction-specific factors. Plan and make decisions accordingly, leveraging the supporting regional interrelationships. Transform the concept of "home" in "home rule" from isolated to interrelated.

Second—collaborate: "The most successful plans ... are the result of a collaborative [multi-stakeholder] effort. ... There is a creativity and attention to multiple factors that result from these interdisciplinary processes," writes Beatley.

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Plan-it Sustainably *(continued from previous page)*

Implication: Instead of pursuing individual projects and/or regulatory compliance, launch ongoing, multi-stakeholder, community sustainability planning initiatives to drive the ongoing socio-economic/environmental innovation required for success.

Third—cultivate educational dialogue: “We must begin extensive, far reaching campaigns to educate the public about sustainability, why a shift is necessary, and what they can do to help.”

Implication: Sustainability is fundamentally about multi-stakeholder education and dialogue, ultimately connected to planning, the sum of which will correct our course from the unsustainability of business as usual to sustainable communities. Begin the dialogue now, ahead of sustainability planning initiatives, and continue them during planning and implementation.

With many thanks to the SFSU team for their excellent work, we begin the Sustainability Committee's research program. We invite you to comment on this article, <http://bit.ly/nSwicU>; review the project report and resources (<http://bit.ly/oTwEme>) including the pitch to the class, presentation to the board, and report; and comment and discuss as motivated.

Committee update

Check out the Committee's temporary web home, <http://bit.ly/oOgi1W> and use the resources, comment, and send feedback at <http://bit.ly/ne9ss0>. Join the Committee's email list for alerts, news, updates, and resources.

Upcoming event

July 28 North Bay RAC “Brown Bag” at Sonoma Mountain Village—a walking tour of a model sustainable redevelopment project (see [page 25](#)).

Recommended resources

Something from the “other” coast – Sustainable Jersey.™ A certification program for municipalities that want to go green, save money, and take steps to sustain their quality of life over the long term (<http://bit.ly/pAVB2>). See also, Office of Planning and Sustainable Communities, <http://bit.ly/plLX9>

Something in our region – Sustainable San Mateo County. Fifteenth annual edition of Indicators for a Sustainable San Mateo County, <http://bit.ly/p1ovW6>

Training invitation—Strategic Sustainability Planning

Those interested can join a one hour, free webinar (8/9, 9/22, or 12/6; **CM | 1.0**) or an award winning, introductory web-based course at a reduced promotional cost of \$55, including a bonus one hour conference call discussion session (CM credit being explored). We can do it if 10 or more sign up before July 30. Details at <http://bit.ly/ofTYwr> ■

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Answer to “Where in the world?” (Page 6)

Mixed use in downtown Thimphu, Bhutan.
 Photo by Linton Atlas

For an interesting article on Thimphu and Bhutan, see Dale Vanessa Holiday, “An Interlude in the Himalayas—One planner’s professional and personal experiences in Bhutan,” *Planning Magazine*, July 2011, page 36. Go to <http://bit.ly/ojgL3W> and login.

Northern California roundup

The yin and yang of Mountain View. “At the Google campus, employees sip lattes under bright umbrellas as others pass on company bicycles, laptops secured in the front baskets. Closer to downtown [is] ... a less attractive environment [where] the competition for work is fierce, housing is expensive, and cuts in government services are pending as the city tries to balance its budget. Corporate campuses, with their cafeterias, day care centers, and other employee perks, are not always integrated into the surrounding community. Just as important, many local residents are not in the talent pool for high-tech jobs. Those looking for work at the Community Services Agency have skills like housecleaning, gardening, and washing dishes, and those jobs are scarce. And it can take a lot of work to live in Mountain View, especially if you must work for the minimum wage. The median single-family home in Mountain View cost about \$890,000 as of May, and two-bedroom apartments rent for well over \$1,500 a month.” —Hadley Robinson, “Mountain View’s 2 economic realities,” *The Bay Citizen*, June 4, 2011. <http://s.tt/12AZf>

From Richmond to Oakland, it’s tough to build accessory dwelling units (ADUs). “Accessory dwelling units—cottages, in-law apartments, or granny flats—could provide an estimated 1,000 new residences near selected BART stations, research by UC Berkeley Professor Karen Chapple shows. [But e]xisting zoning laws in the five-city study area of Albany, Richmond, El Cerrito, Berkeley, and Oakland disqualify small properties from building ADUs. [And several of the] cities require an additional unit of off-street parking for an added dwelling unit but do not allow tandem, or end-to-end, parking. Of approximately 5,400 single-family residences within a half-mile radius of El Cerrito del Norte, El Cerrito Plaza, North Berkeley, and Ashby BART stations, only 1,460 are even eligible for ADUs under current zoning laws.” —Peter Enzinger, “4 BART stations, 1,000 new residences, 0 added footprint,” *SPUR Blog*, June 8, 2011. <http://bit.ly/ktry58>

Will Oakland-San José bill come up again? “The state Assembly voted 71-5 on May 26th to approve a bill from Assemblyman Jim Beall, D-San José, to give an additional seat on the Metropolitan Transportation Commission to the counties of Santa Clara and Alameda. Each county would get a third member on the board, up from two currently. The mayors of San José and Oakland would appoint the new board members.” (Mike Rosenberg, “Bill to add transportation seat for San José, Oakland passes Assembly,” *The Mercury News*, May 26, 2011. <http://bit.ly/lkcxzz>) The bill is now in the Senate Committee on Transportation and Housing. A First Hearing had been set for June 15th but was cancelled at the request of the author.

The greening of San Francisco. Three California cities made a list of North America’s 27 greenest. San Francisco ranked first, Los Angeles 7th, and Sacramento 15th. Siemens Corp. sponsored the survey, which was conducted by the Intelligence Unit of *The Economist*. “The survey ranked large American and Canadian cities on 31 indicators such as

(continued on next page)

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Northern California roundup *(continued from previous page)*

water and air quality. San Francisco requires residents to put recyclable materials into a blue bin, compostables into a green one, and regular old garbage into a black one. Since San Francisco launched the mandatory program in October 2009, it is keeping 77 percent of discarded materials out of landfills—the highest such diversion rate in the US. San Francisco also was the first major US city, in 2007, to ban grocery and chain pharmacy stores from handing out disposable shopping bags.” —Wendy Koch, “San Francisco tops list of ‘green’ cities in survey,” *USA Today*, June 29, 2011. <http://usat.ly/jjPZrp>.

Also see “The Good, the Bad and the Ugly of Greening Cities,” by Alexis Madrigal, *The Atlantic*, June 30, 2011, <http://bit.ly/jTKewJ>. “In an age where Washington doesn’t seem capable of dealing with any major structural problem, cities have become the most exciting laboratories for policy. [There,] many more minds in many more environments are trying to solve the basic problems humans face all living together: Where do we get energy? What do we do with waste? How do we keep the air clean? How will people get around? ... This isn’t the first *green cities* ranking, nor is it the only one. But it strikes me as significant that one of the largest companies in the world is now putting out this kind of list. The muscle lining up behind a future that uses less resources, produces less waste, guarantees cleaner environments, and reduces the derangement of the atmosphere can be shocking.”

Help for Caltrain. “Caltrain’s effort to upgrade its train service surged ahead when the Federal Railroad Administration awarded the cash-strapped system \$16 million to design a modern signaling system. The funds would be used for ‘positive train control’—a GPS-based system that would allow Caltrain to more efficiently monitor and control trains. The system automatically slows down trains when they reach close proximity, prevents derailments, and ensures trains don’t go into zones where work is being done on the rails. All rail systems in which passenger trains share tracks with freight are required by the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008 to install positive control by 2015. The signaling system would also allow Caltrain to run more trains up and down the Peninsula—a key objective of the popular train service that carries 41,000 people per day. Caltrain announced that it will allow ‘train movements and schedules to be coordinated more efficiently’ and enable the ultimate operation of high-speed rail on the Peninsula. —Gennady Sheyner, “Caltrain gets \$16 million grant for signal upgrades,” *Palo Alto Weekly*, June 23, 2011. <http://bit.ly/j1xELg> ■

An inglorious end for redevelopment as we know it

Under budget and political pressures over the past two years—the Legislature took nearly \$2 billion from redevelopment in 2009—redevelopment agencies around the state have pared staff and moved to protect projects in the planning stage.

In June, Executive Director Harry Mavrogenes resigned from the San José Redevelopment Agency, once the state's second largest, after trimming to eight a staff that once had 134 employees and a \$437 million budget.

But two bills signed into law on June 29th as part of the 2011-12 budget package have delivered the most severe blow. Those bills effectively eliminate the state's 398 redevelopment agencies, although some may be resurrected in other forms.

The bills

Assembly Bills ABx1 26 and ABx1 27 call for dissolving or restructuring redevelopment agencies as a way to immediately divert to local schools \$1.7 billion in tax increment that was previously retained by the agencies for local improvements, including affordable housing. (Because the “tax increment” is devoted to paying off a redevelopment agency's initial investment, it is not available to other local agencies. As a result, the state has been making payments to the schools to replace the amount earned by the redevelopment agencies but lost by the schools.) Statewide, the payments in subsequent years would total \$400 million annually.

Legislators debating the bills variously described them as “an assault on redevelopment” or a needed fix for “a flawed funding method.” Some saw redevelopment agencies as “providing easy money to private developers” for projects that do little to fight blight or provide affordable housing.

Critics of the bills said many agencies would not be able to come up with the cash for their share of the \$1.7 billion and would have to shut down, ending a critically needed source for financing public improvements, not to mention the construction jobs that will be lost. The city of Oakland estimates it will have to find \$41 million not already allocated for other uses to keep redevelopment projects going, including renovation of the area around the Fox Theater—a redevelopment project backed by former Oakland Mayor (now Governor) Jerry Brown. If the city can't find the money, it will have to stop work on a dozen affordable housing projects.

The bills' proponents said it isn't that much money. Although agencies will surrender \$1.7 billion in the new fiscal year, they'll lose just \$400 million a year in future years, out of an annual budget of \$5.5 billion statewide.

The details

ABx1 26 (the “Dissolution Act”) and ABx1 27 (the “Voluntary Program Act”), together the “Redevelopment

Restructuring Acts,” suspend all new redevelopment activities and incurrence of indebtedness and will dissolve redevelopment agencies effective October 1, 2011. Entering into the Voluntary Program allows redevelopment agencies to avoid dissolution by making substantial annual monetary contributions to local schools and special districts.

Cities and counties that participate in the Voluntary Redevelopment Program must make specified annual payments to the county auditor for distribution to schools, fire protection agencies, and transit agencies beginning now (fiscal year 2011-2012). The funds can come from any city or county source, including redevelopment. The city must adopt an ordinance committing to the voluntary program no later than November 1, 2011.

If necessary, each redevelopment agency can suspend all or a portion of its 2011-12 redevelopment funds designated for housing in order to repay the city or county. For fiscal year 2012-13 and beyond, the voluntary programs must make \$400 million in payments to schools and special districts. The future payments cannot come from the portion of redevelopment funds designated for housing, however. The San José Redevelopment Agency would have to pay around \$50 million this year and about \$12 million each year thereafter.

For redevelopment agencies that do not comply, their housing obligations and duties will transfer to the city or county, housing authority, or the state Department of Housing and Community Development.

In the final debates leading up to budget passage on June 28th, two Democrats—Senators Ted Lieu, D-Torrance, and Alan Lowenthal, D-Long Beach—held back their budget votes, seeking changes in the now approved redevelopment legislation. They acquiesced when Senate President pro Tem



Credit: Tombstone-generator.com

(continued on next page)

Senator Darrell Steinberg (D-Sacramento) reassured them that the agencies would be analyzed for fiscal soundness as they downsized.

Housing California, in a July 5th email to its supporters, reported, “Senate President pro Tem Darrell Steinberg reiterated to Senator Alan Lowenthal and others his prior commitment to ensure the payment formula in ABx1 27 doesn’t force out of business redevelopment agencies that lack sufficient available revenue to make the payments. This promise joins those made by Steinberg to Senator Mark DeSaulnier specifically focused on the bills’ impact on redevelopment housing funds:

- “Tighten the circumstances under which a redevelopment agency could suspend its 2011-12 housing funds.
- “Require repayment of any suspended 2011-12 housing funds within five years.

“Assembly Speaker John Pérez also committed to Assemblymembers Toni Atkins and Roger Dickinson that he would work with them on the repayment provision.”

What happens next?

Redevelopment advocates claim that any elimination of redevelopment or imposition of forced payments is unconstitutional. Two major advocates for the redevelopment agencies—the California Redevelopment Association and the California League of Cities—said eliminating the state’s 400 redevelopment agencies will harm the state’s economy and that the decision to take \$1.7 billion of agency funds is unconstitutional. They promised to take their case to the state Supreme Court, where they plan to argue that 2010’s Proposition 22 was designed to prevent just such a raid on local tax revenue.

If the abolition survives the coming court battles, cities can still continue redevelopment projects by paying their

share of \$1.7 billion to the state this year and their share of \$400 million to the state in future years. However, they’d have less money to spend and less flexibility in how they operate.

The possibility of such an outcome has politicians looking for substitute ways to finance local redevelopment projects. One possibility is the “infrastructure financing district.” Several measures being carried in the Legislature would expand the scope of these IFDs so they can retain property taxes from private projects to repay debt that they incur. Assembly Bill 664, for example, would eliminate the requirement for voter approval to issue IFD bonds.

San Francisco is one local agency that plans to continue operating. First, however, the city’s Redevelopment Agency needs approval from the Board of Supervisors by Nov. 1 to allow the release of \$24 million to comply with the survival option. Some of that money would come out of the agency’s budget and some from the city’s general fund. Until then, the agency is in limbo and will not approve new activities or new contracts unless the action is required under an existing agreement. City leaders are hoping for an outcome that won’t hamstring big projects such as the new Transbay Transit Center. (See “Transbay Terminal construction moves along,” [page 16](#).)

This article was assembled from information provided by the California Chapter of the American Planning Association (www.calapa.org), Housing California (<http://bit.ly/k91R0D>), and Goldfarb and Lipman, LLP (<http://goldfarblipman.com>); and from various media including the Associated Press, the Sacramento Bee (www.sacbee.com), the Mercury News (www.mercurynews.com), the San Francisco Chronicle (www.sfgate.com), the San Francisco Examiner (<http://bit.ly/qZczk68>) and the California Planning and Development Report (<http://www.cp-dr.com/node/2964>) ■

Onward and upward



Erik Balsley, AICP, a senior planner at Michael Baker, Jr. in Oakland, has been elected to the Northern Section Board as an Associate Editor of *Northern News*, joining Theresa M. Alster who has been an associate editor since January. Erik will work

with the newsletter team to solicit stories throughout Northern Section toward broadening the readers' understanding of the diversity and commonalities of our planning efforts. He is interested in how new technologies and software can help the newsletter evolve as a multi-platform document. Erik has a master in city planning degree and a BS in planning from MIT, and he spent a year as a researcher at the University of Tokyo.



James A. Castañeda, AICP, a planner with the San Mateo County Planning & Building Department for five years, has been elected to the Northern Section Board as Peninsula Regional Advisory Council Chair. James holds a BS in city and regional planning from New Mexico State University.



Scott Davidson, AICP, a project manager and coordinator with PMC (greater San Francisco Bay Area), has been elected to the Northern Section Board as Advertising Director. In that post, Scott will work to enhance exposure of

the organization and to increase awareness of planning issues and events. He will also solicit advertising from planning and other consultants for Northern Section publications; secure commitments from funding partners; and continue Northern Section efforts to expand its use of various media platforms. Scott has a degree in environmental policy analysis and planning from UC Davis.

(continued on next page)

HSR notes

Compiled by Janet Palma, AICP, and Naphtali H. Knox, FAICP

When harsh criticism from the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) threatened progress on California's high-speed rail, Assembly member Cathleen Galgini (D-Livingston) posed tough questions and criticisms of the report in a letter to the LAO. Meanwhile, at a conference in San Francisco on June 3, officials from several state, federal, and regional transportation agencies met with delegates from Spain to compare notes on how to make high-speed rail work in California and the US.

Feds reject changes proposed to HSR route, construction schedule.

"Rejecting the recommendations of a recent state report, federal officials said on May 25th that they cannot postpone the deadline to start construction of California's \$43-billion bullet train project or allow the state to move the first leg of the proposed system out of the Central Valley. General appropriations law and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act require that construction begin in 2012, the last year the funds would be available. Earlier in May, the California Legislative Analyst's Office concluded that the project was poorly managed, faced potential long-term funding problems, and had a governing structure in need of sweeping reform."—Dan Weikel, "U.S. rejects proposed changes to bullet-train project," *Los Angeles Times*, May 26, 2011. <http://tinyurl.com/3g8dgeg>

Time to invest in HSR. "Every industrialized, competitive country in the world, except the United States, has high-speed rail. President Franklin D. Roosevelt 'built' the nation out of the depression by investing in roads, parks, and other public works. Almost all international high-speed rail systems create a profit after operating costs. California's system is projected to do so too. Proposition 1A (2008) provides \$9 billion for high-speed rail and requires a public-private partnership investment. If private bidders don't see profits, then there will be no bids, no project, and no debt. More than 1,100 private contractors declared interest in bidding on the first leg between Bakersfield to north of Fresno. Are all the other industrial countries wrong and only the United States right? Or have we just lost the national courage to compete?"—Rod Diridon, "It's time to invest fully in high-speed rail," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 27, 2011.

<http://bit.ly/oayZTF>

Spaniards interested in participating in California HSR. "Despite the hammering California's high-speed rail project has taken lately, outside players appear to be as interested in it as ever, including Spanish trade officials and executives from Spain's high-speed rail network. Working with private partners, Spain began building its system 20 years ago, has the second-largest network in the world, and operates it profitably. The Spanish delegation met with the rail authority's board on June 2nd 'to establish and develop long-term cooperation in the field of high-speed rail transportation.'"—Andrew S. Ross, "State's high-speed rail draws Spaniards' attention," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 31, 2011.

<http://tinyurl.com/3j4wkb5>

Bill to rearrange CHSRA. "California would rearrange the state High-Speed Rail Authority's governing board under a bill passed by the state Senate. The authority is charged with developing California's planned \$43 billion bullet train system. Yet critics say its expertise and lines of responsibility are unclear, leading to confusion and poor decision-making. The bill by Democratic Sen. Alan Lowenthal of Long Beach would put the authority under the state's Business, Transportation, and Housing Agency. His SB 517 would remove all nine board members next year." With Senate approval, five members, who would need specific skills to qualify,

(continued on next page)

Onward and upward (continued from previous page)



David Keyon, AICP, a May 2012 MURP candidate at San José State University, has been elected to the Northern Section Board as Student Representative from SJSU. A planner with seven year's development review experience, David

hopes to offer advice to students wishing to pursue AICP certification. David is working toward a master in city planning degree from SJSU with a concentration in transportation and has a BS in city and regional planning from Cal Poly—San Luis Obispo.

Matt Rodriguez (Castro Valley) has been appointed secretary of the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA). Rodriguez has served with the California Department of Justice since 1987. As a deputy attorney general (1987–99) he represented clients of the Land Law Section of the Attorney General's Office including the California Coastal Commission, State Lands Commission, and the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission. Prior to joining the Department of Justice, Rodriguez was Hayward deputy city attorney (1985–87), assistant city attorney for Livermore (1983–85), and associate program analyst—Governor's Office of Planning and Research (1981–83). The position requires Senate confirmation. ■

HSR notes (continued from previous page)

would be appointed by the governor to replace them. The Senate and Assembly would appoint four more members. The measure passed June 1 on a 26–12 vote and was sent to the Assembly. —“Bill rearranges California high-speed rail authority,” *The Associated Press* and *Sacramento Bee*, June 1, 2011. As of June 30, the bill had been re-referred by wide margins and with “do pass” recommendations to two Assembly committees.

Case for high-speed rail getting stronger. “The last time many Californians thought about high-speed rail was in the voting booth. On Nov. 4, 2008, more than 6 million of us voted to tell the state to get going, to build high-speed rail in California. In the last 2 1/2 years the case for high-speed rail has gotten stronger, not weaker. When voters approved the plan, a barrel of oil cost about \$55; today the price is almost \$100. Unemployment was around 8 percent back then, and it is now over 12 percent statewide and even higher in many areas. Californians need the jobs. On the day that first segment of interstate was dedicated we did not know where all the money would come from to build a 40,000-mile network throughout the nation, and we did not know when it would be finished. However, it was because of the vision of those who were willing to initiate the effort that, today, America has the most extensive highway system in the world. California and the United States need high-speed rail, so let's keep going.” —Mayors Edwin Lee, Kevin Johnson, Chuck Reed, Ashley Swearingin, and Antonio Villaraigosa, Special to The Bee: “Viewpoints: Case for high-speed rail grows only stronger,” *Sacramento Bee*, June 7, 2011. <http://bit.ly/lc6z9a>

Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood offers his thanks. On June 20th, “the US Conference of Mayors reaffirmed their support for an American high-speed rail network. They approved a resolution commending the Obama Administration's ‘leadership in promoting high-speed rail in America’ and urging Congress ‘to support the Administration's High-Speed Rail Initiative through the appropriations and authorizations process.’ Our investment in high-speed rail will be significant, but the cost of expanding roads and airports to accommodate a rapidly growing population over the coming decades will be even more costly, and it won't solve the problem. High-speed rail will bring jobs, economic development, revitalized US manufacturing, and reduced travel time to America. The mayors who submitted the resolution include Californians Ashley Swearingin of Fresno, Antonio Villaraigosa of Los Angeles, Jerry Sanders of San Diego, and Ed Lee of San Francisco.” —*Fast Lane*, the official blog of the US Secretary of Transportation, June 20, 2011. <http://bit.ly/ii6TH6>

Locating a Gilroy HSR station. More than 50 people took part in the second meeting of the Gilroy HSR visioning project at Gilroy High School on June 15th. “Attendees were charged with planning the future of a city destined for one of two possible high-speed rail stations in 2025. The workshop focused on specific benefits and challenges facing the surroundings of the two station options in Gilroy. While the California High-Speed Rail Authority will have the final say, Gilroy's visioning study aims to produce a recommendation that will carry significant weight in influencing the authority's choice. A downtown station would work well with existing pedestrian, housing, and other infrastructure, but the [site is] cramped. [A site on] agricultural land east of Gilroy has room to grow, but it is away from the heart of the city, lacks existing infrastructure, and has a higher risk of flood. The visioning project was funded by a \$150,000 grant from the Valley Transportation Authority and \$50,000 from the city. Another public workshop will be held in August, and

(continued on next page)

America's Cup EIR available for review

The Draft Environmental Impact Report for the 34th America's Cup and James R. Herman Cruise Terminal and Northeast Wharf Project is available for review and comment. The public hearing on the Draft EIR (Case No. 2010.0493E) will be held at the Planning Commission in Room 400, City Hall, on August 11, 2011, at noon or later. Check the Planning Commission Agendas page one week before the hearing date for more detailed information. Public comments on the EIR will be accepted until 5 PM on August 25, 2011.

- Notice of Availability of a Draft EIR, <http://bit.ly/pouBYd>
- Draft EIR Part 1 (30 MB) <http://bit.ly/pf0Ni3>
- Draft EIR Part 2 (15 MB) <http://bit.ly/p6cybt>
- Draft EIR Part 3 – Appendices (18 MB) <http://bit.ly/qJu9Xm>
- Draft EIR Part 4 – Appendices (13 MB) <http://bit.ly/p5UD6l>

Questions and comments regarding the Draft EIR can be made to **Joy Navarrete**, Senior Environmental Planner, San Francisco Planning Department, 1650 Mission Street, Suite 400, San Francisco, CA 94103. (415) 575-9040, joy.navarrete@sfgov.org ■

HSR notes *(continued from previous page)*

the council will approve the final recommendation to CHSRA in October.” —Eric Gneckow, “Gilroy maps vision for high-speed future,” *Gilroy Patch*, June 16, 2011. <http://bit.ly/k26p09>

What does governor have in mind for HSR? *(This lead thanks to Jeff Wood of ReconnectingAmerica.org)* “Governor Brown seems to be making a point [with line-item budget vetoes] that there needs to be a statewide rail plan, and that the Prop 1A funds should not be treated as candy to be handed out to local systems without clear coordination between the Authority and those systems.” *(Ed. Note: Brown cut \$234 million from public transportation projects, including \$4 million to convert Caltrain engines from diesel to electric.)* “A bigger target of these cuts might be Caltrain... in a political sense. Caltrain has become increasingly aggressive about charting its own course without being too strongly tied to high speed rail. It is possible that Brown’s line-item vetoes are a kind of brushback pitch, a warning to Caltrain to play nice and participate in a true statewide rail plan and not just be out for themselves. If so, that’s a good move. California needs a true statewide rail plan. The plan should use high speed rail as a spine, and local systems—such as Caltrain, Metrolink, BART, Muni, Metro Rail, and others—as the bones, arteries, and nerves. But it also matters what Brown has in mind with ‘a statewide rail plan’.” —Robert Cruickshank, “Jerry Brown calls for statewide rail plan,” *California High Speed Rail Blog*, July 3, 2011. <http://bit.ly/nUMyRg>

Peninsula slowdown. “The chief executive of California’s high-speed rail project is stopping almost all planning work on the \$6.1 billion Peninsula section of the proposed bullet-train system until project leaders can figure out whether it’s possible initially to use two tracks in the section between San Francisco and San José, instead of the four tracks that the authority has proposed. Caltrain is conducting a study to see if using two tracks might be feasible. In the interim, CEO Roelof van Ark has directed the California High-Speed Rail Authority’s planners ‘to reduce their activities on the Peninsula to a minimum’ and cease further work on a draft environmental-impact report. No new work will be started ‘until clarity is reached on the selected way forward for San Francisco to San José,’ van Ark said in a statement.” —Janis Mara, “Peninsula high-speed rail work stopped while two-track alternative pondered,” *InsideBayArea.com*, July 13, 2011. <http://bit.ly/oQ57pb>

Central Valley HSR spine will extend either north or south. “Without most of the funds needed to build the entire \$43 billion high-speed railroad, state officials hope to first launch bullet train service from the Central Valley to either San José or to an area north of Los Angeles sometime later this decade. The abridged route is the latest reality check for the first U.S. high-speed train, but it’s also seen as a legitimate destination to drown out an earlier proposal for a Central Valley ‘train to nowhere.’ The first leg of construction will connect Merced and Bakersfield at an estimated cost of \$6 billion to \$8 billion in state bonds and federal grants. Before starting service, the rail authority will either extend the tracks west and north to San José, or south to Palmdale or San Fernando Valley. The decision to build north or south won’t come until next year. But if San José is chosen, Silicon Valley travelers could expect the 250-mile trip between downtown San José and Bakersfield to take 1 hour, 49 minutes. Trains would reach 220 mph in the Central Valley.” —Mike Rosenberg, “Central Valley express train could be zooming to San Jose,” *The Mercury News*, July 13, 2011. <http://bit.ly/rpiZLO>

Janet Palma, MS, AICP, works in Environmental Health Services for the San Francisco Department of Public Health and is Principal at J. Palma & Associates, an environmental planning concern. She currently serves on the City of San Leandro Board of Zoning Adjustments as the At-Large member. You can contact her at janetpalma@comcast.net ■

Photos from 2011 Honor Awards presentation

Award winners in 11 separate categories were honored at a sold-out APA California – Northern awards presentation and dinner on May 20th at Scotts Seafood, Jack London Square, Oakland. These are photos of some of the awardees.



California Planning Foundation Awards. Graduating Student Merit Awards: Alyssa Sherman (San José State University), Cathleen Sullivan (UC Berkeley). Honorable Mention: Maryam Sanieian (San José State University)



Hard-won Victories, Award of Merit: City of Oakland Zoning Update. From Oakland Strategic Planning: Ed Manasse; Laura Kaminski, AICP; Alisa Shen, Eric Angstadt; Hanson Hom, (Section Director) Barry Miller, AICP (Barry Miller Consulting), Neil Gray (Oakland Strategic Planning)



Education Project Award: Managing Fire in the Urban Wildland Interface. Kenneth S. Blonski (East Bay Regional Parks), Hanson Hom, AICP (Section Director), Carol L. Rice (Wildland Resource Management)



Hard-won Victories Award: EIR for Candlestick Point, Hunters Point Naval Shipyard Phase II. From San Francisco Planning Department: Lisa Gibson, Joy Navarette; Hanson Hom, AICP (Section Director); Chad Mason, AICP (Water Emergency Transportation Authority); Wells Lawson (Mayor's Office of Economic Development); Stan Muraoka (San Francisco Redevelopment Agency); Michael Rice, AICP (Atkins); Terri Vitar (Atkins)



Focused Issue Planning Award: SB 375 Impact Analysis Report. Hanson Hom, AICP (Section Director), Charles Long (ULI), Alexander Quinn (AECOM), Christopher Clement

(continued on next page)

San José State grad wins AICP Outstanding Student Award, 2011

Kayla Platt, MUP, has been awarded AICP Outstanding Student recognition for 2011. The award recognizes outstanding attainment in the study of planning by a student who is being graduated from an accredited program during the academic year of the award. Students must be graduating from a Planning Accreditation Board–accredited planning program. Each respective planning program convenes a jury to make selections and schedules the award presentations at their respective schools. This year, 49 planning departments participated in the program, and each recognized an outstanding 2011 graduate, who received a certificate from AICP. ■

Tech Transfer dissolves into ITS Berkeley

Caltrans' Division of Local Assistance did not renew its longstanding contracts for the California Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) and the Cooperative Training Assistance Program (CTAP) for FY 2011-12. As a result, the Technology Transfer Program, which served local agencies for more than 25 years, will no longer provide subsidized CTAP training nor serve as the California LTAP Center. Instead, the program will be absorbed into the Institute of Transportation Studies at UC Berkeley.

On the plus side, integration into ITS Berkeley will mean greater access to transportation engineering and urban planning faculty and other University resources. State-of-the-art professional development, including the award-winning work zone safety training, will continue to be offered. Four streamlined one-day courses on traffic control and a four-hour workshop for flagger training are available on request for delivery at the agency's location. Agencies may select one course or a combination of courses to meet specific safety training needs.

Information on work zone safety training and other Tech Transfer programs is available at <http://bit.ly/iIg6Hj> ■

Photos from 2011 Honor Awards presentation (continued from previous page)



Innovation in Green Community Planning Award: Martial Cottle Parks Master Plan. Ellie Wagner (California State Parks), Kimberly Brosseau (County of Santa Clara Parks & Recreation), Hanson Hom, AICP (Section Director), Jane Mark, AICP (County of Santa Clara Parks & Recreation), Isabelle Minn (Design, Community & Environment)



Comprehensive Planning Award, Large Jurisdiction: Santa Clara Station Area Plan. Frank L. Fuller, Heidi Sokolofski (Field Paoli Architects); Hanson Hom, AICP (Section Director); Rhajeev Bhatia, AICP (Dyett & Bhatia); and City of San José: Jenny A. Nusbaum, AICP, Allen Tai, AICP, Joseph Horwedel, AICP



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Transbay Terminal construction moves along *By Naphtali H. Knox, FAICP*

Demise of redevelopment agencies? Imminent Caltrain bankruptcy? Viability of California high-speed rail?

Not to worry. Large development projects such as Mission Bay, Hunter's Point, and the Transbay Terminal are priorities for the City and County of San Francisco and will move ahead.

The Transbay Terminal will be a new multi-modal transit center three-quarters of a mile east of San Francisco's Union Square—and the same distance from Moscone Center—on the site of the old Transbay Terminal. The original terminal opened in 1939, first as a rail hub, then served as a bus station after 1959. At its peak, it served 29 million passengers per year. The new terminal will serve 11 transportation systems and accommodate 45 million people per year.



Transbay Terminal, 1939. Source: [TransbayTerminal.org media-gallery](http://TransbayTerminal.org/media-gallery). <http://bit.ly/9oIQku>

The 40-acre Transbay Redevelopment Plan was adopted in June 2005, noted Courtney Pash, San Francisco Redevelopment Authority assistant project manager for the Transbay Project Area, during a presentation of the project to the Housing Action Coalition of Santa Clara County on May 13th. Five years later, in August 2010, the Transbay Joint Powers Authority (TJPA) broke ground on the Terminal with demolition of the bus ramps that connected the terminal to the Bay Bridge. Members of the TJPA are Bay Area transportation and elected officials and the San Francisco Board of Supervisors.

The project area is bounded generally by Mission Street on the north, Main Street on the east, Folsom Street on the south, and Second Street on the west (see Figure 1). It includes 12 acres of state-owned land—parcels previously occupied by freeway and bus ramps. Approximately 3,000 housing units—35 percent of them “affordable”—and 3 million square feet of new office and commercial space plus another 100,000 square feet of retail are to be developed.

The Transbay Land Transfer Agreement was entered into by the California Department of Transportation, the City and County of San Francisco, and TJPA in 2003. The California Transportation Commission unanimously authorized transfer of the state-owned land to the City and County of San Francisco and the TJPA in December 2007. An RFP

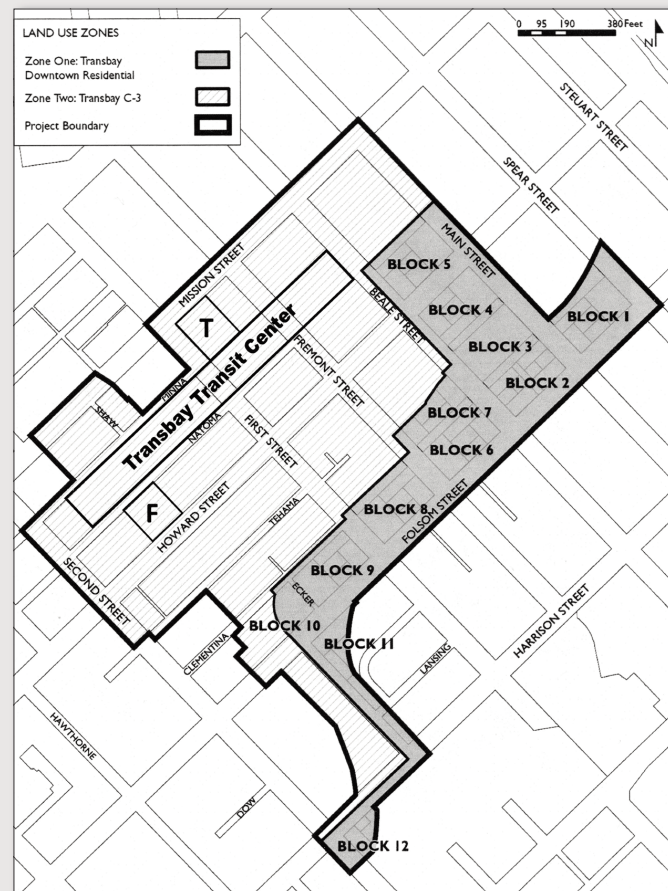


Figure 1. Land Use zones, Transbay Terminal Project. Source: SFRDA

was issued, based on which architects Pelli Clark Pelli and developer Gerald Hines were selected to design and carry out the project. While Pelli remains the architect for the entire project, the development of the transit center was split off so it could be started immediately. A cross-section of the terminal (Figure 2) shows a 5.4-acre park on the top, with bus transit below. Below that are the ground-level grand concourse; the ticketing and gate areas underground; and the rail platforms at the lowest level. Muni and BART will continue to be boarded along Market Street.

The transit center site has been cleared, and construction is proceeding in two phases. Phase 1—which is underway and fully funded—involves digging out the train box and constructing the above-ground terminal so that construction of the underground rail station can proceed later, unimpeded. Estimated completion of Phase 1 is 2017. Phase 2 involves the underground extension of the rail lines from the current Caltrain station at 4th and King to serve both Caltrain and high-speed rail. The Caltrain route has been selected, and eminent domain is underway to buy the parcels.

The project is zoned in two parts. Zone One (along the project's southeast) includes most of the publicly-owned parcels. Most blocks in

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Figure 2. Cross-section of terminal. Top to bottom: 5.4-acre park; bus terminal; street-level entry concourse; lobby, ticketing, and gates for HSR and Caltrain; and train platforms. Source: TransbayTerminal.org media-gallery. <http://bit.ly/jzSLwp>

Zone One will be developed with a residential tower, podium style housing, and townhouses. The San Francisco Redevelopment Agency prepared the design guidelines for Zone One and is responsible for granting approvals for all of those parcels. The proceeds from Zone One land sales and the tax increment are pledged to paying for construction of the transit center. “Those proceeds are leveraged through a Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) loan from the federal government,” explained Pash. The loan is “in place of the typical tax-increment bonds redevelopment agencies issue.”

Zone Two comprises the remaining properties, to be developed with office and commercial. A Draft Transit Center District Plan was prepared for this area in 2009 by the San Francisco Planning Department, and preparation of the EIR is underway. Most of the Zone Two properties are privately owned, with the exception of the site of the 1,000-foot tower at the west corner of Mission and First Streets (“T” on [Figure 1](#)) and a site on Howard Street south of the transit center (“F” on [Figure 1](#)). The tower and the transit center will be the focal point of the area.

A major goal of the overall project is to “create a livable community—keep transit riders as pedestrians”—while maximizing land value in order to pay for the terminal. In Zone One, Block 5



Transbay Park and project area from the west. Source: TransbayTerminal.org media-gallery. <http://bit.ly/jzSLwp>

(between Beal and Main Streets on the northerly side of Howard) will accommodate approximately 700,000 square feet of commercial. Block 3 will be a park. Blocks 2, 7, 11, and 12 are zoned for podium and townhome residential units ranging from 35 to 165 feet high. Design guidelines for Blocks 1, 4, 6, 8, and 9 call for one slender tower of 250 to 550 feet per block, with floor plate limited, along with podium housing, shared open space, and shared underground parking. In addition, approximately 100,000 square feet of neighborhood-serving ground floor retail will be developed—primarily along Folsom Street—to foster an open and inviting area without competing with Market Street or Union Square. ■

What others are saying

Be oil that you can be. “Since petroleum replaced whale oil as a main fuel source more than a century ago, chemical companies and refineries have found a startling range of uses for it, from asphalt to vanilla flavoring in ice cream to pills from the drugstore. It has oozed into everyday life, so reducing dependency is a more complicated proposition than some might think.” —Stephanie Clifford, “Oil Oozes Through Your Life,” *The New York Times Sunday Review*, June 26, 2011. <http://nyti.ms/YzS71>

Kelo again? *Northern News* has been covering for some time the fallout from the United States Supreme Court 2005 decision in *Kelo v. City of New London* and how it is affecting California’s counties, cities, special districts, and redevelopment agencies. (See *Northern News*, September 2005, <http://bit.ly/kyijBw>) *Kelo* upheld the right of government to take private property via eminent domain where the condemned property will be put to a public use. California voters approved Proposition 99 in the June 2008 statewide election as a reaction to *Kelo*. (See *Northern News*, April 2009, pp. 8–9. <http://bit.ly/kcLY9p>) A bill was introduced in the House of Representatives this April that would prohibit state and local governments that receive federal economic development funding from using eminent domain for the purpose of economic development. The Private Property Rights Protection Act (HR 1433) would preclude states from receiving federal economic development funds for two fiscal years if the state takes property through eminent domain for private use, effectively prohibiting the practice. The federal government would be prohibited from using eminent domain for economic development altogether. (*APA Advocate*, June 9, 2011, <http://bit.ly/iVSZs2>) The bill is in the House Committee on the Judiciary.

Question. What do you get when you cross “commuters using bicycles” with “bicycle commuters who are women”? **Answer.** A *New York Times* graphic. The results for several US cities are charted along with results from Vancouver, Berlin, Tokyo, Amsterdam and Copenhagen. (<http://nyti.ms/mtG8cf>) The related article argues that safety appears to be a major factor for women. <http://nyti.ms/lxITa8>

Adapting to climate change. “Picture California a few decades from now, a place so hot and arid the state’s trademark orange and lemon trees have been replaced with olive trees that can handle the new climate. Alternating floods and droughts have made it impossible for the reservoirs to capture enough drinking water. The picturesque Highway 1, sections of which are already periodically being washed out by storm surges and mudslides, will have to be rerouted inland, possibly through a mountain. These aren’t scenes from another deadly-weather thriller like *The Day After Tomorrow*. They’re all changes that California officials believe they need to brace for within the next decade or two. . . . In the San Francisco Bay area, planners are considering increasing the height of the seawall on the city’s waterfront and the levees at the San Francisco and Oakland airports. In Ventura, construction crews moved Surfer’s Point 65 feet inland, the state’s first experiment in “managed retreat.” Because warmer air provides less lift, airport runways the world over will have to be lengthened in order for planes to take off.”
—Sharon Begley, “Are you ready for more?” *Newsweek*, May 29, 2011. <http://bit.ly/iYpkBW>. **Also see** “California’s next nightmare,” an interactive feature by Alex Prud’homme, *The New York Times Magazine*, July 1, 2011. <http://nyti.ms/ip4HRF> ■

Flawed data ranks South Bay transit over San Francisco and New York

By Robert R. (Bob) Piper, Ph.D

The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) was ranked second best in the nation at getting people from where they live to where they work by the Brookings Institution¹ (*Northern News*, June 2011, “Yet Bay Area transit ranks high,” p. 11. The full Brookings report, “Missed Opportunity: Transit and Jobs in Metropolitan America,” can be downloaded at <http://bit.ly/oOY7f4>).

This finding elevates the VTA above San Francisco (16th place) and New York (14th) and gives Modesto an honorable 10th position. Transportation planners were astonished by these figures, with good reason. The findings are not credible.

Particularly troubling are two assumptions defining how the data is entered into the model. They appear to be the most significantly flawed because they govern the GIGO (garbage in, garbage out) input. The first assumption is distance from residence to transit. The second assumption is commute time.

Distance to the station/stop

Brookings based origins on census block groups.² Commuters are deemed to share a common origin at the population-weighted centroid of the block group. They are “served” if there is at least one transit stop within a three-quarter mile “as the crow flies” radius. Walking distance along actual streets and walkways would be greater: the three-quarter mile distance would translate into a walking distance of about nine-tenths of a mile. This is almost twice the median distance of one-half mile that passengers typically walk to their stations, as measured consistently over decades of research.

With this, Brookings rejected two industry guidelines—one-quarter mile to bus stops or one-half mile to rail stations. These guidelines do not represent how far individuals walk. Rather, transit planners use them to determine stop and route separations that ensure reasonable coverage of the area alongside transit routes. Brookings adopted three-quarters of a mile as a single standard for both bus stops and rail stations. They did so because of speculation that some individuals with no alternative to transit will walk farther, particularly in low-density suburbs. Curiously, the source they cited for the three-quarter mile standard includes neither data on nor mention of walking distance to transit.

The industry guidelines stem in part from recognition that how far transit riders walk to their stations tells us nothing about how far people *in general* are willing to walk. Fortunately, such information can be inferred from walking distance data.

Rides per capita (per year) is commonly used as a metric for comparing transit attractiveness in different communities. By the same logic, it measures how attractive transit is in individual land parcels near a station. Rides per capita at the micro level can be used to estimate a propensity to walk for the general population as follows.

Assume that residents are uniformly distributed and are alike in all respects except distance to transit. The curve of rides per capita versus distance is then a proxy for propensity to walk. To derive it, divide the number of passengers who walk from each increment of distance by the area within that increment. The incremental area grows with distance (because the total area increases with the square of the distance). For example, the area within one-half mile of a station is four times that within one-quarter mile. The resulting curve drops off far more rapidly than the raw walking distance curve. Median walking distance to a station is almost one-half mile, but the propensity to walk is already dropping toward zero by a quarter of a mile. The same is true for transit modal share.

The nine-tenths of a mile assumed by Brookings is three to four times the distance at which market penetration by transit becomes insignificant. The industry guidelines are empirically based and valid.

Another assumption of the study is that residents can be treated as though concentrated at the population-weighted centroid of each block group. No justification is offered. However, extensive research on transit-oriented development indicates that the distribution of development close to a station (or stop) is what matters. That distribution is independent of the distance between the centroid and the station.

Both the three-quarter mile radius and the centroid assumptions conflict with evidence of how transit riders behave. Together, these assumptions make up the Brookings definition of access to transit, a major input to the model. Both have been applied throughout the metropolitan areas

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investigated. If the definition does not fit reality, how believable can the outputs be?

The 90-minute commute time

Brookings bases their analysis on a 90-minute maximum, one-way commute time. The round trip commute consumes up to 180 minutes (three hours). Here, again, there is a disconnect with empirical data. One need look no further than the table on page 38 of the May/June 2011 issue of APA's *Planning magazine* ("By the Numbers," <http://bit.ly/rrXA3x>). The highest round trip commute time is 69.1 minutes (in the New York metro area). The numbers in the table are averages. The median for New York metro would be closer to 60 minutes. This is consistent with historically estimated commute times by foot or cart from ancient villages and medieval towns. Brookings' 90-minute commute is almost three times the recognized median.

Brookings acknowledges the discrepancy:

"A 90-minute, one-way commute time certainly exceeds the vast majority of commute times in America. It also does not represent a preferred or desirable outcome for all metropolitan transit systems. ... However, it establishes a comparable benchmark across all metropolitan areas, particularly one that recognizes the prevalence of longer commutes in larger metro areas where a majority of transit usage occurs." (Page 13 of report)

If the input conflicts with observed behavior, how reliable can the benchmark be?

So far we see that the Brookings analysis is extraordinarily sensitive to assumptions about transit access and commute time. The values in the present study are inconsistent with well-documented traveler behavior. But there is a further problem. Any change in these assumptions will affect each of the metro areas differently.

These two flaws alone are sufficient to undermine confidence in the study results. Thus the rankings of metro areas, such as VTA as #2, and the descriptions of how well transit serves commuters in each metro area are suspect.

Brookings devotes an entire page to the need for additional research. They write, "... much more can be done

to build on these findings that will allow for a deeper understanding of transit's current and potential role..." Among other topics, they propose to explore different travel time thresholds, different definitions of "covered" for both the home origin and the destination, off-peak commutes, and non-work transit trips. Such research would be expected to result in substantive revisions to their findings.

Conclusion

Brookings ranked home-to-work transit in 100 metropolitan areas, but the model was flawed. It relied on assumptions that conflict with empirical data. The report admits (endnote 64), "...the combined access measure has no real-world significance..." The report also indicated that modifying one assumption substantially alters results and does so differently when considering different metro areas. Several other assumptions are candidates for debate but more so as questions of judgment in comparing apples to oranges.

Transit planning faces daunting challenges at all government levels. It is disappointing that this report from the venerable Brookings Institution contributes so little to addressing these challenges. Let us hope that, in the future, Brookings will better focus its extensive resources and data on producing reliable and practical solutions to the problems facing transit.

- ¹ The Brookings Institution is a nonprofit public policy organization based in Washington, DC. Their mission is to conduct high-quality, independent research and, based on that research, to provide innovative, practical recommendations. <http://www.brookings.edu/>
- ² Census block groups are the smallest geographical units for which the U.S. Census Bureau publishes data. The census block group is a collection of census blocks within a census tract.

Robert R. Piper, now retired, has over 35 years' experience as a transportation specialist in the Bay Area and Canada. He holds B.S. and M.S. degrees in engineering from MIT and an MBA and a Ph.D. from the Stanford Graduate School of Business where he majored in transportation and logistics. Piper was Berkeley's Director of Transportation during its traffic diverter controversy in the 1970s. He has published papers on walking distance to transit and on transit-oriented development. ■

Northern Section welcomes 20 to AICP membership

With AICP membership comes the obligation to a professional code of ethics and continuing professional education. Ninety California planners sat for the May 2011 AICP Exam. Of those, 63—including 20 planners from Northern Section—passed. That represents a 70 percent pass rate for California—slightly higher than the national pass rate of 68 percent for 562 applicants. Passing the rigorous exam is a tremendous accomplishment and a mark of professional distinction. With AICP membership comes the obligation to a professional code of ethics and continuing professional education.

Please join the Northern Section Board of Directors in congratulating our newest AICP members:

Marcus E. Adams
Robert Holmlund
Michael V. Iswalt
John J. Kim
Yanjia Liu
Michael T. Loewke
Sophie Martin
Justin Meek
Tessa Munekiyo
Sebastian J. Petty
Michael E. Profant
Paul J. Rosenbloom
Kevin M. Saavedra
Laurice S. Salamack
Nathan M. Schmidt
Teresa R. Spade
John Speka
Wade Wietgreffe
Peter Winch
Iris Yuan

Resources for the AICP Code of Ethics, Professional Development, or Certification Maintenance (CM) Credit can be found at the Chapter website

<http://www.calapa.org/en/cms/?140>

or the Northern Section's website,

<http://www.norcalapa.org/> ■

Are you “fit” for the job?

By Steve Matarazzo



My purpose in telling this anecdote is to offer some depression relief to students who have just graduated from planning school and are bemoaning the poor job market for entry-level planners. The job market should improve in the near term, but don't be discouraged if you're not “fit” for any one particular job that you are competing for.

Let me explain. I once read a book for a political science class I took in college entitled, *Sam Yorty, the Constant Candidate*. It was a biography of one of Los Angeles' mayors who was always running for one political job or another.

My early planning career was a lot like that. During that time I interviewed for more than 30 public planning positions. Some, just to keep my interview skills up; some because I wanted a change; and (luckily) only a couple because I was desperate. (Hint: “desperate” easily translates during the job interview unless you are a very, very good actor.) Most of the time I ranked fairly well in the competition, but some times I did poorly based on the “needs” of the individual city to which I was applying.

[Ed. Note: Steve has held the following urban planning positions in California: Assistant Planner, City of Carpinteria; Assistant Planner, Town of Woodside; Planner III, County of San Mateo; Planning Consultant, Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey Counties; Community Development Director, City of Morgan Hill; Principal Planner/Zoning Administrator, County of Santa Cruz; Community Development Director/Redevelopment Planner, City of Sand City; City Administrator, City of Sand City.]

The job market for planners should change in a positive direction in the near future due to demographics and the economy. Many of the baby boomer planners will be retiring within the next 5 years. This should open up a lot of planning positions in the lower rungs as an escalator effect occurs within many public planning agencies. (New planners, however, will likely be subject to revised, less generous retirement benefits.) In addition, leaner and meaner public-sector planning department staffing caused by the Great Recession will open up more opportunities for planning consultants to take up the slack and hire more planners.

In regard to the latter opportunity, it should be one of your career prerequisites to spend some of your time working in the private sector. I did, and I found it very enlightening. You will be amazed at how some public sector planners treat you from the “other side of the counter.” I have never forgotten this lesson in humility, and it has made me a better public servant.

Finally, you do not need a doctorate in urban planning to land your first job, even though the competition has increased significantly over the last several years. I remember waiting outside an interview room (which was not sound-insulated) when applying for my first planning job after college. Listening to one of the applicants before me tell the interviewer of his experience and education left me with extreme anxiety before entering for my interview. The prior candidate was much more seasoned than I was and had more education. However, the job did not call for a seasoned veteran, but it did require someone who was very enthusiastic, was easy to get along with, and who was a quick study. I got the job anyway! ■

NORTHERN SECTION CALENDAR

To list an event in the Northern Section calendars (*Northern News*, monthly; *eNews*, every two weeks), go to <http://bit.ly/ed1Ekc> to see the required template (at top of page), the current listings, and where to send your formatted item.

ONGOING

ONLINE VIDEO. Symposium, 1909–2109: Sustaining the Lasting Value of American Planning. This four-hour symposium on May 21, 2009, brought together federal officials, planners, academics, and grassroots advocates to focus on the achievements of America’s first 100 years of planning. See a video of the symposium (**free**) and earn CM credits. <http://bit.ly/ekrzEY>
CM | 4.0 may be earned by viewing all four parts of the symposium video

ONLINE VIDEO. Planning for Healthy Places with Health Impact Assessments. Through examples and activities, this “how-to” guide explains the value of Health Impact Assessments and outlines the steps involved in conducting one. APA and the National Association of County & City Health Officials developed the course. See a video and earn CM credits. **Free.** The video is available through **December 31, 2011.** Visit <http://bit.ly/2ZH32W>
CM | 6.0 may be earned by viewing all course materials and taking an exam

JULY						
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JULY

7/28

Energy Basics for Planners. 6:30–8 PM, MetroCenter Auditorium, 101 Eighth Street, Oakland. Refreshments and networking at 6:00. **Free.** How do planners participate in the development of new sources of electricity? How do current environmental regulations and transmission-related factors determine whether a utility-scale project is proposed in the first place? What’s a megawatt-hour? Greg Blue (Director of Government Affairs, SunPower), Rachel Peterson (CPUC Energy Division), and Peter Weiner (Environmental/Energy Practice Lead at Paul, Hastings, Janofsky & Walker LLP) will address these questions, presenting concepts fundamental to energy in general and the planning process for new utility-scale projects, particularly renewables. Please RSVP to Josh Hohn, jnhohn@gmail.com **CM | 1.5 pending**

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7/28 North Bay RAC Brown Bag, Sonoma Mountain Village. Noon–1 PM, Coddling Enterprises, 1400 Valley House Drive, Rohnert Park. **Free.** Bring your lunch; dessert will be provided. Sonoma Mountain Village is the first community in North America endorsed by the international One Planet Communities program. Join us for an overview presentation and a walking tour of the campus, including a visit to the Sonoma Mountain Business Cluster, one of 12 California Innovation Hubs (iHubs) in the state. RSVP by July 26th to Kristine Gaspar at kristinegaspar@w-and-k.com or (707) 523-1010. For more information, visit <http://www.sonomamountainvillage.com/>
CM | 1.0 pending

AUGUST						
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AUGUST

8/17 Incubators, Innovators, and Creative Communities. 12:30–1:30 PM, SPUR, 654 Mission Street, San Francisco. Creative communities are the wellsprings of innovation-driven economies, but when cities thrive and costs soar, artists and musicians can find themselves struggling to survive. Increasingly, art organizations are offering support to artists in a competitive marketplace, while private-sector entrepreneurs are looking to connect to creative innovators. Hear Nicholas Jayanty of Reversal Films, who is developing an incubator to assist Austin musicians; Katrina Rodabaugh, of San Francisco’s Intersection for the Arts incubator; and Alexa Arena of Forest City, creator of the new 5M incubator. **Free for APA and SPUR members**, \$5 for nonmembers. For more information contact ghilyard@spur.org
CM | 1.0 ■