



Plan Bay Area 2040

MTC/ABAG Plan Bay Area 2040 Environmental Impact Report (EIR)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is CEQA?

CEQA, or the California Environmental Quality Act, is a statute adopted in 1970 that requires state and local agencies to consider the environmental consequences of decisions that involve changes to the environment. The purposes of CEQA are to:

- Provide information about the environmental effects of projects.
- Identify ways that environmental impacts can be avoided or reduced.
- Prevent significant environmental impacts through mitigation measures or alternatives.
- Disclose the reasons why a project can be approved despite significant environmental impacts where the agency determines the project benefits override the environmental impacts.

CEQA applies to projects undertaken, funded or requiring issuance of a permit or approval by a public agency. The required four-year update of the Bay Area Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) known as “Plan Bay Area 2040” or “the Plan” is considered a project under CEQA. MTC and ABAG are preparing an environmental impact report (EIR) to analyze the potential for impacts resulting from implementing the updated Plan.

What is an NOP?

An NOP, or Notice of Preparation, provides notification to interested parties that a public agency has decided to prepare an EIR for a project and to solicit comments about the scope and content of the information to be included in the EIR.

What is the purpose of these Scoping Meetings?

The purpose of the scoping meetings is to provide an opportunity for interested parties to make suggestions regarding the scope and content of the EIR analyses. Scoping sessions provide an opportunity to further define environmental issues, feasible alternatives and potential mitigation measures that may warrant in-depth analysis in the environmental review process. Comments received during public scoping are considered in preparing the Draft EIR analyses.

Scoping meetings focus on environmental issues related to the project. They are not a forum for discussing the merits of a project. There will be other workshops, meetings, and hearings for that purpose.

What is an Environmental Impact Report (EIR)?

An EIR is an informational document to be used by the public and by decision-makers when making choices about projects. In an EIR, significant environmental impacts (substantial adverse physical changes to the environment) are disclosed; methods (mitigation measures) for reducing or avoiding impacts are identified; and project alternatives are developed which also seek to reduce or avoid adverse environmental effects.

What will the EIR study?

The EIR will be a “full scope” document. It will analyze all of the required CEQA environmental issue areas: aesthetics and visual resources; agriculture and forestry resources; air quality (including toxic air contaminants); biological resources; cultural resources; geology, seismicity, soils, and mineral resources; energy consumption; greenhouse gas emissions and climate change; hazards and hazardous materials; hydrology and water quality; land use and planning; noise and vibration; population and housing; public services and recreation; transportation; utilities and other service systems. The EIR will also address cumulative effects, growth inducing impacts and other issues required by CEQA.

How does the CEQA/EIR process work?

The CEQA process is a highly prescriptive evaluation and disclosure process dictated by state law. The general steps of this process and our target schedule are as follows:

- Notice of Preparation (NOP) (May 16)
- 30-Day NOP Comment Period (May 16 through June 15)
- Public Scoping Meetings (May 26, May 31, June 2)
- Preparation of Draft EIR (now through January 2017)
- Release of Draft EIR (January 2017)
- 45-Day Public Comment Period on Draft EIR (late-January through early-March 2017)
- Preparation of Response to Comments/Final EIR (March through June 2017)
- Release of Final EIR (June 2017)
- Public Hearings for MTC and ABAG to consider certification of Final EIR and adoption of Plan (June/July 2017)

This process is integrated with, but separate and distinct from, the process of drafting the Plan which is described further below.

What is the Project?

The project being analyzed in the EIR is the required four-year update of the Bay Area Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) known as “Plan Bay Area 2040” or “the Plan”.

Plan Bay Area 2040 is a long-range plan that balances future mobility and housing needs with other economic, environmental, and public health goals. It identifies regional transportation planning needs, priorities and funding, and allows project sponsors to qualify for federal funding for public transit, streets and roads and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The Plan must demonstrate achievement of a region’s share of state greenhouse gas emission reduction goals and is required to be updated every four years.

MTC and ABAG have developed three land use and transportation scenarios, to illustrate the effects that different housing, land use and transportation strategies have on the region’s adopted goals and performance targets:

- Main Streets Scenario
- Connected Neighborhoods Scenario
- Big Cities Scenario

MTC and ABAG will evaluate the three scenarios, and one or a combination of them will be identified as the preferred Plan, which will be analyzed as “the project” in the EIR. The remaining scenarios may be analyzed as alternatives in the EIR.

Each scenario uses the same regional growth control totals of 2.4 million new people, 1.3 million new jobs and 823,000 new housing units, along with the same discretionary transportation revenues to support the growth. Each scenario shows us different combinations of housing development, commercial growth and transportation investments.