

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
CALIFORNIA REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
SAN FRANCISCO BAY REGION

STAFF SUMMARY REPORT (Shin-Roei Lee)
MEETING DATE: May 9, 2007

Item: 11

Subject: Focusing Our Vision – Information Item on ABAG Planning Initiative

Chronology: Board has not heard this item before

Discussion: In many aspects, FOCUS (short for Focusing Our Vision initiative) will complement Water Board's permitting effort regarding municipal regional stormwater permit and Basin Plan amendment effort on wetland and stream protection policy. Staffs working on both municipal regional stormwater permit and the wetland and stream protection policy have been coordinating with key Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) staff to align our efforts with this regional planning initiative. Mr. Kenneth Kirkey, Planning Director of ABAG, will provide an overview on FOCUS. The following is to provide some background information on FOCUS:

In 2002, regional agencies, local governments, and community groups in the San Francisco Bay Area created a Vision for the region to collaboratively address housing and traffic problems while improving the quality of life for all residents. The Bay Area Vision is based on the core principles that evolved from the Smart (or Focused) Growth Strategy to concentrate future growth near transit and in the existing communities that surround the San Francisco Bay.

FOCUS, advances the Vision. FOCUS is a regional planning initiative spearheaded by ABAG and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), in coordination with the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD). It is partially funded by a Blueprint Grant from the State of California Business, Transportation, and Housing Agency.

The goals of FOCUS are to:

- ⊗ Strengthen and support existing communities
- ⊗ Create compact communities with a diversity of housing, jobs, activities, and services to meet the daily needs of residents
- ⊗ Increase housing choices

- ⌘ Improve housing affordability
- ⌘ Increase transportation efficiency and choices
- ⌘ Protect and steward natural habitat, open space, and agricultural land
- ⌘ Improve social and economic equity
- ⌘ Promote economic and fiscal health
- ⌘ Conserve resources, promote sustainability, and improve environmental quality
- ⌘ Protect public health and safety.

Strategies to achieve goals related to focused growth and development

- ⌘ Encourage infill and the efficient use of land capacity within existing communities
- ⌘ Provide for compact, complete, resource-efficient communities near existing or planned transit and other infrastructure
- ⌘ Provide opportunities for people to live near their jobs and work near their homes
- ⌘ Encourage a mix of land uses with jobs, housing, retail, schools, parks, recreation, and services in proximity
- ⌘ Locate development in areas served and likely to be served by frequent passenger rail, bus, and/or ferry service
- ⌘ Support community revitalization without displacing current residents
- ⌘ Ensure that all socio-economic groups benefit from regional change
- ⌘ Use existing infrastructure capacity and maximize return on new infrastructure investments
- ⌘ Reduce the number and length of auto trips and facilitate walking and biking
- ⌘ Maintain goods movement corridors and retain land uses that support related distribution and industrial uses
- ⌘ Direct development so as to promote and protect public health and safety, avoid hazards, and/or mitigate development impacts
- ⌘ Reserve land to accommodate future growth at appropriate densities

Strategies to achieve goals related to resource protection and conservation

- ⌘ Maintain the productive function of lands for agriculture and other resource needs
- ⌘ Protect and restore wildlife corridors and habitat
- ⌘ Preserve the natural flow and recharge of water and support ecosystem processes

- ⌘ Protect and enhance significant open space and recreation areas and networks
- ⌘ Protect scenic, historic, and cultural resources that contribute to the region's identity

Voluntary Process for Willing Jurisdictions

In the FOCUS process, regional agencies are working together with local governments to create a specific and shared concept of where growth can best be accommodated (Priority Development Areas) and what areas need protection in the region (Priority Conservation Areas). Interested local governments will have the option to apply to the regional agencies for Priority Development and Conservation Area designations. Together, these areas will inform regional agencies and the State where incentives and assistance are needed to support local efforts that accommodate growth as infill development near transit and to support the protection of important natural resource areas. Only willing jurisdictions will receive priority area designations.

Designation of Priority Development Areas

Applications are now being accepted for designation or priority development areas. A local government can nominate areas that fit at least three basic criteria: 1) areas within an existing community, 2) areas near existing or planned fixed transit or served by comparable bus capacity, and 3) areas planned or in the planning process for more housing. The submission deadline for the first round of applications is June 29, 2007. After all applications are received, local and regional staff will review the development vision for these areas and ensure that the basic criteria are met. The Priority Development Areas will be presented to the ABAG General Assembly for adoption on October 26, 2007.

Designation of Priority Conservation Areas

Regional agencies are working with the Green Vision group, a coalition of regional and local open space organizations, to identify areas that are priorities for conservation efforts. FOCUS will collaborate with local governments to determine Priority Conservation Areas, based upon local plans and the results of the Green Vision project. All local governments interested in having Priority Conservation Area Designations will have the option of applying at a later date. These areas will also be presented to the ABAG General Assembly for adoption in October 2007 and complement the efforts to direct growth away from these natural resource areas.

Incentives

Regional agencies are working to align many existing and future financial incentives for local governments that have designated priority areas. Potential sources include future funding from MTC's Transportation for Livable Communities and Housing Incentive Program, as well as additional discretionary transportation funds from MTC's Regional Transportation Plan 2009 Update. The State is also considering aligning funding from the recently passed housing and resource bonds to regional priorities, potentially including FOCUS priority areas.

Long-term Regional Solutions

FOCUS is a long-term strategy, and new sources of incentives are likely to arise in the future that will be available to Priority Development and Conservation Areas. The intention of FOCUS is to target areas for development and conservation incentives for the next few decades.

Recommendation: No action needed.