

Plan Bay Area 2050+ Round 1 Engagement

Background

In June 2023, staff presented the Plan Bay Area 2050+ public engagement approach to the Joint Planning Committee with the ABAG Administrative Committee, outlining the phases for engagement over the two-and-a-half year plan update cycle. In July 2023, staff kicked off the plan update with the first round of engagement, which consisted of a series of pop-up workshops at existing community events and an online survey. Both efforts provided Bay Area residents with the opportunity to comment on the impacts of the pandemic on their lives and their concerns for the future as it relates to the four plan elements of housing, the economy, transportation and the environment. The input received helped staff refine the current plan strategies to reflect our communities' new realities as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic. MTC-ABAG staff also took advantage of this engagement to collect feedback from the public on Transit 2050+ and a potential future transportation revenue measure. This memorandum summarizes the results of the Plan Bay Area 2050+ engagement.

Round 1 Engagement Activities

Based on the public feedback received as part of the development of MTC's 2023 Public Participation Plan, staff prioritized activities for the first round of engagement that were responsive to the public's priorities to 1) prioritize online engagement and quick opportunities to provide input such as surveys and questionnaires, and 2) go to where the people are already gathering when conducting in-person engagement and offer incentives to increase participation. The first round of Plan Bay Area engagement began in late July, which kicked off a series of pop-up workshops at festivals, farmers markets and other community events across the nine-county Bay Area. In early August, staff also launched an online survey and two parallel digital promotion campaigns to promote the individual pop-up workshops and the survey. The

survey and promotional efforts were conducted in Chinese, English, Spanish and Vietnamese. For our partners and technical stakeholders, staff hosted office hours, two virtual workshops and a webinar. Office hours were available on a first-come, first-served basis from late September to late October. The workshops were held in late August and early September and the webinar in mid-October. These stakeholder activities rounded off the first phase of engagement for Plan Bay Area 2050+.

To facilitate the participation of historically-underserved populations, staff prioritized hosting the pop-ups in Equity Priority communities, or in communities with larger concentrations of limited-English proficient individuals, youth, people of color and/or low-income residents — in line with the engagement priorities adopted by the Commission as part of the 2023 Public Participation Plan. Additionally, to encourage participation in the survey from Equity Priority Communities and those without access to internet, staff partnered with over a dozen community based-organizations (CBOs) throughout the region and established a multi-lingual “Listening Line” that allowed residents to dial a phone number to leave their comments as a voice recording. Our CBO partners also helped spread the word about the pop-up workshops and the online survey, and they collected hundreds of hard-copy surveys from members of the communities they serve. Members of the public were also encouraged to submit written comments via email to info@planbayarea.org. In all, nearly 3,000 residents participated via the various engagement platforms. Below is a description of the engagement activities, including an overview of the results.

Pop-up Workshops — Late July to early September

From July 30 to September 6, staff conducted 15 in-person pop-up workshops to inform refinements to the plan’s current strategies. The refined strategies will be incorporated into the Draft Blueprint. To promote participation in the pop-ups, staff gave away Plan Bay Area 2050+-branded bags and promoted the workshops via a paid digital promotional campaign on Facebook and by sending emails to MTC’s and partner’s contacts. In total, **over 500 people participated in the pop-up workshops, yielding nearly 1,300 comments**. The table below provides details on where the workshops were held.

	Event/Location	County	Dates
1	Sunday Streets — Mission District	San Francisco	Jul. 30
2	Family First Night at Livermore Downtown Farmers Market	Alameda	Aug. 3
3	Richmond Farmers Market	Contra Costa	Aug. 4
4	Sonoma County Fair	Sonoma	Aug. 5
5	East Palo Alto Community Market	San Mateo	Aug. 9
6	Fairfield Farmers Market	Solano	Aug. 10
7	American Canyon Walmart	Napa	Aug. 11
8	Outer Sunset Farmers Market & Mercantile	San Francisco	Aug. 13
9	Hayward Third Thursday Street Party	Alameda	Aug. 17
10	College of San Mateo Farmers Market	San Mateo	Aug. 19
11	West Oakland Farmers Market	Alameda	Aug. 20
12	College of Marin	Marin	Aug. 23
13	R & S Gilroy Farmers Market	Santa Clara	Aug. 26
14	Silicon Valley Pride	Santa Clara	Aug. 27
15	Diablo Valley College	Contra Costa	Sep. 6

Online Survey

Using SurveyMonkey, staff developed and released an online survey that mirrored the content of the pop-up workshops. The survey ran from August 8 to September 7 and was promoted digitally to Bay Area residents in all nine Bay Area counties via a paid campaign on Facebook and Instagram. It was also promoted through MTC’s Facebook page and hosted on the Plan Bay Area website. Overall, **the survey yielded over 2,900 survey responses and over 15,000 additional comments.**

Stakeholder Engagement

Staff hosted two stakeholder workshops, allowing for a deeper dive into specific topics for technical experts. The workshops drilled down on proposed strategy refinements. One workshop was held on August 30 and the second was held on September 7. Invitations to the workshops were sent to local jurisdiction staff, state and federal agency staff, advocates and other interested technical partners. **The workshops attracted over 200 partners and stakeholders to provide detailed input on the strategy refinements, totaling hundreds of comments.** MTC-ABAG staff led small group collaborative discussions using the Mural online platform, which functions as a digital white board that enables people to collaborate visually and remotely.

Furthermore, a technical webinar held on October 19 provided an overview of the revised planning assumptions that will inform the Draft Blueprint. The webinar served as an opportunity for stakeholders to ask questions about underlying draft technical assumptions that will be used in analysis and modeling of the Draft Blueprint in early 2024, including external forces, draft needs & revenue forecasts, and the draft regional growth forecast. **It attracted over 90 partners and stakeholders and resulted in over 50 questions and comments that staff were able to address during the webinar.**

Tribal Engagement

As requested by Caltrans, MTC staff has reached out to the six federally-recognized Tribes in the Bay Area to engage them in discussions to brainstorm the best ways the Tribes prefer to stay involved in the development of the plan. Public engagement staff is currently coordinating these discussions. In the meantime, staff is working with the Tribes to schedule a webinar to provide Tribes with an opportunity to learn more about MTC-ABAG projects, including Plan Bay Area, and discuss additional opportunities for Tribal governments to get involved in MTC-ABAG's work. Also, when the plan update kicked off, staff mailed notices of consultation opportunity to the 31 Native American Tribes in the Bay Area as required by Assembly Bill 52 (Gatto). As of the date of this memorandum, only the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria Tribe has requested consultation with MTC-ABAG.

Findings

For both the pop-up workshops and the survey, staff asked residents what the “new normal” meant to them to understand how the pandemic had affected their lives as it relates to the plan’s four elements: housing, the economy, transportation and the environment. Participants were also asked about their concerns for the future. Staff integrated the comments from the online survey, the hard-copy surveys and the pop-up workshops and a summary of the top themes and comments heard is included as Appendix 1 and organized by element. In general, the overall tone of participants attitudes was great concern about the current situation and the future, as well as a sense of hopelessness and helplessness that showed up across the four elements.

For more information on how input from the workshops, survey and other forums impacted Draft Blueprint strategies, please see Attachment G.

Appendix 1. Round 1 Engagement Summary Findings

Housing

The top-of-mind concern for a majority of participants was housing affordability, followed by homelessness and home access, and housing insecurity.

Themes	Subthemes	Sample of Comments
Affordability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More affordable housing needs to be built • Deep frustration that not enough is being done to solve the housing affordability crisis • Participants stressed that “market-rate” housing is not affordable for middle class/middle-income households • Recognition that it is unsustainable for the region to have such limited housing supply and options • No hope of ever buying a house in the region or of being able to continue living in the Bay Area • Little to no affordable housing for students, seniors, low-income people, families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“We continue to fail to build enough affordable housing. We need to prioritize affordable housing instead of market-rate luxury housing, Airbnb, and hotels that are only for the rich.”</i> • <i>“There isn't enough! and we're not building fast enough. There's plenty of money just too much red tape.”</i> • <i>“Buying a house seems completely unrealistic.”</i> • <i>“I plan to move to another state in less than three years because I can no longer afford to live in the Bay Area.”</i> • <i>“Homelessness is such a focus we have lost sight of moderate income housing needs”</i>

Themes	Subthemes	Sample of Comments
Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to address homelessness • More unhoused people in all communities across the Bay Area • Need for more shelters and support services for people who are unhoused 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Housing is not normal, homelessness big issue to deal with; people have no place to go”</i> • <i>“Most of the homeless population in California came from California. Many of those people even have jobs. The cost of housing is too high. I see many luxury condo buildings sitting empty for months and months. We need more affordable housing.”</i>
Housing Insecurity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many expressed that they would be homeless if they lost a rent-controlled unit • Concerns about gentrification and displacement • Several face evictions due to financial hardship • Adult children with full-time jobs needing to move back in with parents to avoid homelessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The cost of housing is exponentially growing, and many people are moving out of the area and those who stay and are working class are barely making ends meet. Housing insecurity causes more issues in the community as more people become unhoused or have unstable homes.”</i> • <i>“My concern is that people will continue to get priced out of the place they have called home all their lives.”</i>

Economy

The overwhelming majority of Economy Element comments focused on the negative impacts of inflation and the high cost of living in the Bay Area, followed by low or stagnant wages and the job market, and income inequality.

Themes	Subthemes	Sample of Comments
<p>Inflation / Cost of Living</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs of basics like food, utilities and gas, along with goods, services and housing, have increased dramatically since Covid • Frustration that seemingly everything will continue to increase in cost, with no signs of near-term reductions • Cost increases have negatively impacted the lives of Bay Area residents, altering how and where people live, including some who may have to leave the Bay Area altogether 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The economy affects everything else.”</i> • <i>“Everything is too expensive; before, prices were more accessible to buy the basic necessities.”</i>
<p>Wages / Jobs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many residents remarked that while inflation has increased costs, wages are either lower or stagnant and not keeping up with inflation • Minimum wage is not considered a living wage in the Bay Area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“We make the same amount, but necessities have gone up.”</i> • <i>“Housing unaffordability makes job recruitment more difficult”</i> • <i>“Companies are replacing workers with digital; affects retail jobs. No job security.”</i>

Themes	Subthemes	Sample of Comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People are concerned about automation and AI and how that impacts/will impact the availability of good paying jobs • Concerns about the volatility of the job market with mass layoffs and strong hiring happening at the same time • Training and job placement are needed to compete with automation • People prefer working from home and would like to see more remote jobs at all levels, not just white collar jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Working from home is much preferred — don't want to drive and pay bridge tolls.”</i>
<p>Income Inequality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased income inequality has been exacerbated since Covid between the rich and middle or working class • Middle class is disappearing as a result of wealth disparity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Income inequality is too high and likely getting worse.”</i> • <i>“Worried that the Bay Area is becoming a playground only for wealthy people. Want a Bay Area for all people where people of all incomes/backgrounds can thrive and learn from each other.”</i>

Transportation

Transit was a central theme of comments related to transportation, followed by changes in travel behavior as well as bike/pedestrian improvements. As a reminder, transit issues are being tackled through the parallel Transit 2050+ planning process, which in turn will inform the development of the Plan Bay Area 2050+ Final Blueprint in 2024.

Themes	Subthemes	Sample of Comments
<p>Transit</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General call to improve transit, with safety, cleanliness and frequency as the top three issues to address • Support for expanding transit to the suburbs in general and BART specifically, especially to North Bay counties, as well as expanding routes and service hours • Serious negative impacts to transit-dependent communities due to safety, cleanliness, service cuts during the pandemic • Concern that lack of transit access leaves many people with disabilities and seniors homebound • Participants are beginning to see AVs as a threat to transit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Public transportation needs to be as fast, easy & convenient as driving, or people will stay in their cars.”</i> • <i>“The elevators at BART frequently go out and aren't fixed in a timely manner and the fare gate frequently often don't work. Whenever there's not an attendant at the station, I risk getting trapped. Buses are no better. Many drivers won't stop when there are homeless people at a stop, and they frequently pass by people with wheelchairs and walkers because the lifts don't work.”</i> • <i>“Transportation is broken. Multi-modal is tough in the Bay Area because nothing connects easily to anything else. The transit agencies</i>

Themes	Subthemes	Sample of Comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-quality transit options needed to/from the places where people were pushed out • People driving more because transit does not serve their travel needs 	<p><i>need to get together and connect. Nimby cities hurt the system connectivity. Transit should be a public good and not funded by rider fees.”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“BART has dramatically deteriorated in personal safety. I used to ride BART 5-6 days a week. Now I avoid it because of crazy people, people smoking in cars, and filth. So sad! We need a security guard on every train.”</i>
Travel Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lot of changed travel behavior, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Driving more due to safety/cleanliness concerns or service cuts on transit ○ Using transit more because it’s now less crowded than pre-pandemic • Changing modes due to work-from-home: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ More driving due to less need to commute ○ More biking due to less need to commute 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Fewer trips to downtown San Francisco, but more trips between neighborhoods.”</i> • <i>“I find that I am using my bike to get around even more than I used to. Changing my life structure around active modes of transportation.”</i> • <i>“I don’t take public transportation at all post-pandemic.”</i> • <i>“I drive less, commute less. Walk and bike more locally.”</i>

Themes	Subthemes	Sample of Comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ More people prefer to stay away from transit and drive due to hybrid work schedules ● Longer commutes due to housing unaffordability and moving away during the pandemic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>“I travel only by car now as I do not feel safe on public transportation.”</i> ● <i>“The timing of my commute has changed.”</i> ● <i>“Hybrid work means that I am spending less time commuting, which I prefer because it gives me more free time.”</i>
<p>Bike/Pedestrian Improvements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase safe bike and pedestrian infrastructure ● Better maintenance of the existing network ● Encourage and provide alternative mobility options ● Prioritize bike/ped infrastructure over vehicles ● Concern that we continue to subsidize driving over other modes ● Perception that bike/ped infrastructure causes traffic ● Some opposition to funding/expanding bike lanes, specifically the RSR Bridge lane, using toll revenues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>“I am concerned that bicycle, pedestrian, and transit infrastructure is neglected and is not put as the first priority. I am concerned that we continue to build for automobiles.”</i> ● <i>“Need to make communities more walkable.”</i> ● <i>“It is still a huge uphill battle to get anything resembling not just functional, but GOOD, public transit and bike infrastructure in place. Sidewalks still in many places are non-existent or only 6-9 feet wide. Frankly, this is just unacceptable, and we will not stand a chance at meeting our</i>

Themes	Subthemes	Sample of Comments
		<i>region's housing or environmental needs without firmly making non-car transportation a priority."</i>

Environment

The top three themes under the environment element were cleaner streets/communities, followed by climate and adaptation, and finally environmental degradation.

Themes	Subthemes	Sample of Comments
<p>Cleaner Streets/Communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People’s biggest concern is trash in communities, neighborhoods, cities, parks, etc. • Perception that everything is dirtier since COVID • Cities have become filthy, with downtowns in the worst shape • Crime rate and drug abuse has increased • Sense that homeless encampments are everywhere • Waste and pollution are terrible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“There is more trash on the streets.”</i> • <i>“More trash bins around the neighborhood. Address illegal dumping. Neighborhood needs to be cleaner.”</i> • <i>“It is in general becoming a place that is not safe to live and not a place to be proud of.”</i>
<p>Climate and Adaptation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing climate anxiety: need to do more to address greenhouse gas emissions and address climate change • Worry about the world children and future generations will inherit • A pervasive fear that society is not adequately preparing to address the effects of climate change, with a sense of urgency missing from current efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“What kind of world will our kids live in, with first-of-their-kind pattern shifts in climate, temperatures, rainfall distribution, tides, everything. What kind of system failures will they have to navigate: crops, transportation, migration, who knows. It’s very scary and very humbling to say to kids, I’m sorry, we screwed this up for you, good luck. We don’t know</i>

Themes	Subthemes	Sample of Comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frustration regarding the lack of coordination between climate policy and reality, including challenges related to skilled labor, cost, and technology availability • Doubt regarding the viability of current environmental initiatives, with skepticism about their effectiveness • Worries about the government's preparedness for unexpected natural disasters and the urgency of climate change are expressed • Calls for increased investments in adaptation planning and preparation for intensifying climate disruptions • Worries about emergency response preparedness and need for better coordination in case of wildfires and support for vulnerable populations 	<p><i>what's going to happen and it likely won't be nice."</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"It honestly feels like the end of the world and I'm not religious. I'm anxious, angry and depressed about climate change and species die offs, horrified about Lithium mining fracking and deep-sea mining. Want to cry all the time."</i> • <i>"We're not getting ready to absorb the effects of climate change."</i> • <i>"Heat and smoke and fires are being exacerbated by climate change and require much more preparation."</i> • <i>"Climate change isn't coming, it's here. It's great that we are moving toward electric for vehicles and transit, but these other threats are very concerning."</i>
<p>Environmental Degradation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern about disproportionate impacts on low-income communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"I'm concerned about pollution in the Bay Area will increase, particularly impacting low-</i>

Themes	Subthemes	Sample of Comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception that air quality is getting worse compared to previous years • Belief that environmental protection and pollution reduction should be top priorities • Concerns about the high cost of environmental issues and their impact on corporate profits 	<p><i>income communities and communities of color.”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Hotter and more polluted. Traffic increase after pandemic causing pollution and climate change. Dirty air and water. And it's worse in lower income areas. I.e. San Francisco vs Richmond/San Pablo.”</i> • <i>“Really want it to get easier to be a good steward of the environment. We have solar panels and an electric car - but I wish it was easier to not generate so much waste.”</i> • <i>“Clean water and air are essential regional priorities.”</i> • <i>“Trash, debris, weeds all over the area. How does Phoenix keep itself sparkling clean? What happened to us?? It's so sad and embarrassing.”</i>