

Summer 2024 Partner Engagement Findings

Background

This summary highlights the input received from meeting participants at the technical workshops conducted on September 12, 2024, and September 18, 2024, held at the Bay Area Metro Center in San Francisco. Participants included local jurisdiction, county, regional, state, and transit agency staff, as well as staff from advocacy organizations. More than **60** attendees participated in the workshops. The workshop topics were tailored for a more technical audience and included two sessions: one session focused on Transportation and one session focused on Housing, the Economy and the Environment. Meeting participants were assigned to specific breakout group discussions based on their interests. Facilitators led discussions to solicit reactions to proposed recommendations and refinements. Key themes are summarized by topic below.

Transportation

Draft Transit 2050+ Network and Strategies

A key question posed to participants asked whether some strategies, or elements of strategies, are a higher priority for funding and implementation than others. They were also asked to comment on whether anything was missing from the set of proposed transit strategies and to share feedback on the Draft Transit 2050+ Network.

Overall, participants emphasized that resources need to be allocated to address the most significant barriers to improving transit services: funding and resource allocation, safety, security, bus stops, wayfinding, speed, cleanliness, connectivity between transit systems and fare integration. MTC/ABAG is seen as a leader for fostering coordination across the region and ensuring rider concerns are addressed. Participants advocated for equity to be strongly considered in transit planning, particularly to ensure better access for lower-income communities to job opportunities.

Participants also highlighted the need for improved connections:

- Within same transit systems, particularly addressing “broken links” that require multiple transfers and long wait times.
- Between different transit systems, particularly user experience through standardized wayfinding and payment systems

Some participants called for better integration of private transit options. Overall, increasing transit frequency is essential to compete with driving and make riders feel comfortable using public transportation.

Non-Transit Transportation Strategies/Priorities

Participants were asked to consider the fiscal and climate constraints as well as policy tradeoffs that were shared, and to comment on the approach of emphasizing climate strategies and de-emphasizing freeway expansion. They were also asked whether some strategies, or components of strategies, are a higher priority for funding implementation than others, as well as to comment on whether anything was missing from the set of revised non-transit strategies.

Overall, participants emphasized the importance of focusing on climate strategies (reducing greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled) over freeway expansion. Participants talked about the importance of exploring strategies focused on sustainability such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions, sea level rise adaptation, increased electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure, and micromobility strategies. They also discussed how funds should be prioritized for sustainable infrastructure in these areas and argued that regional goals need to better align with local implementation and impacts.

Regarding funding implementation, themes that rose to the top included emphasizing the importance of community safety, advocating for traffic calming measures, complete streets, and aligning safety improvements with transit and active transportation options. This included specific references to Vision Zero programs. Sustained funding for these initiatives was discussed, and participants highlighted the need for reliable grant opportunities and financial structures.

Roadway Pricing

Participants were asked about two different pricing strategies and how they could best advance the Plan Bay Area 2050+ vision of an affordable, connected, diverse, healthy, and vibrant region for all – namely, all-lane tolling and a regional mileage-based user fee.

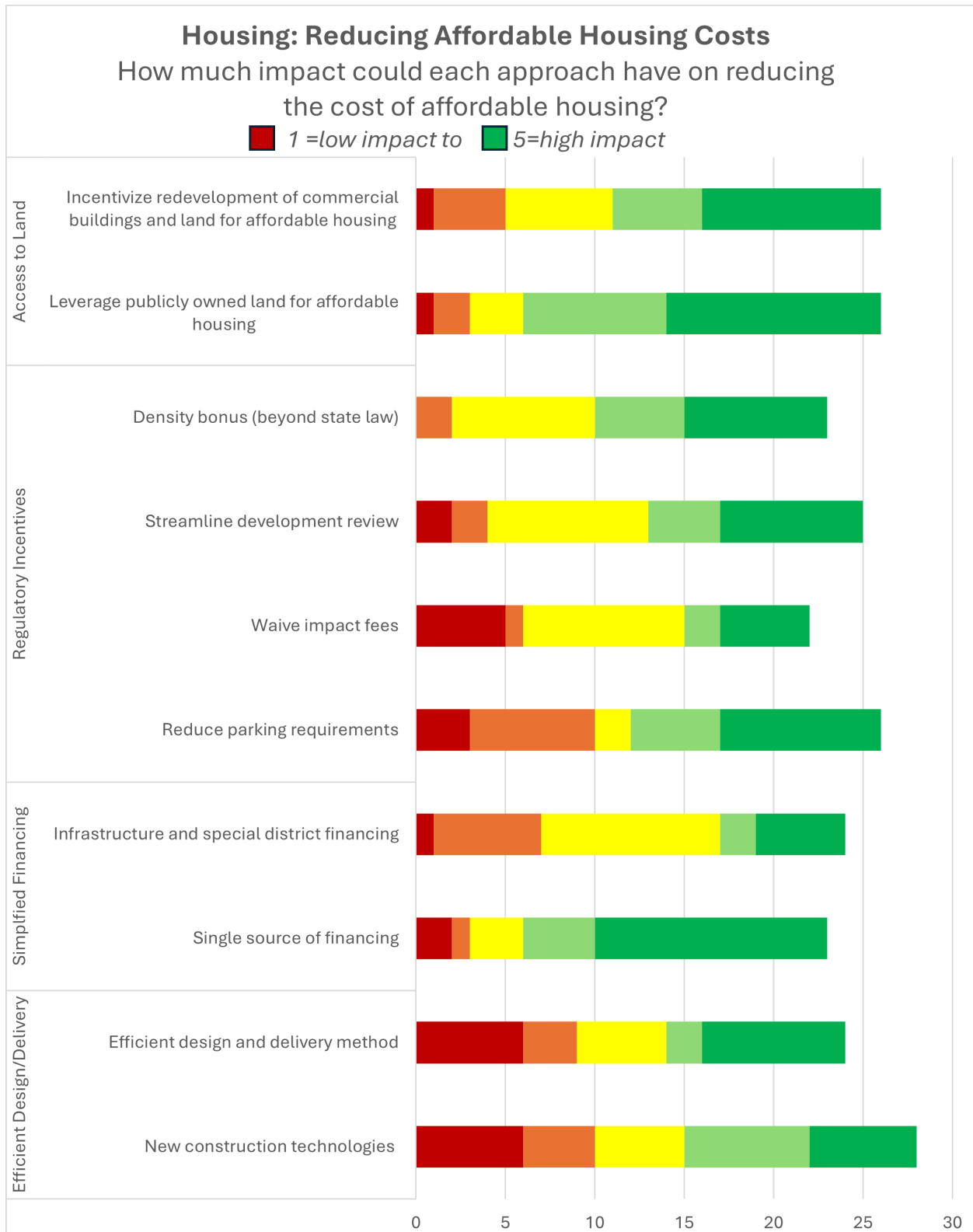
Overall, participants prioritized equity considerations in roadway pricing strategies, particularly regarding impacts on communities with low incomes. Challenges in securing public and political support were discussed, with a suggestion to implement public education and outreach strategies to address any community concerns.

Environmental considerations were also a focus during discussions on road pricing strategies, with an emphasis on selecting a strategy that meets climate objectives. Participants shared concerns about local traffic impacts from all-lane tolling, worrying about increased congestion and its consequences. Overall, participants emphasized the need for roadway strategies to integrate with broader goals, such as sustainability and housing, to mitigate any adverse effects.

Housing

Participants were asked to share their experience with implementing various affordable housing programs and the opportunities and challenges they would anticipate. They were also asked to evaluate the impact of various approaches in reducing the cost of affordable housing.

Overall, participants were very supportive of increasing the supply of housing and talked about the complexities and challenges of implementing housing strategies. To address these challenges, they emphasized the need for improved education around the legal, financial and physical limitations of construction. Inconsistencies in building codes complicate construction processes, particularly around fire safety and environmental issues, requiring the need for building code reform. Many participants highlighted difficulties in navigating local jurisdictional processes and securing financing. Lengthy approval and inspection processes, such as connecting new homes to utilities, cause delays in project completion, requiring more efficient systems to facilitate housing development.



When asked to rate the level of impact on reducing housing costs, participants responded that they believe leveraging publicly owned land and incentivizing redevelopment of commercial buildings and land for affordable housing would have the highest impact, along with reducing parking requirements, streamlining development reviews, and single source financing.

Regulatory incentives have potential benefits, such as reducing parking requirements, and participants strongly advocated for streamlining development reviews. Participants supported the need for simplified financing and efficient processes to enhance project feasibility.

Economy

Participants were asked to discuss their experience with strategies to promote specific job sectors near transit, and the opportunities and challenges they would anticipate. They were also asked to prioritize the types of job sectors they would promote.

Participants discussed the integration of job sectors and housing near transit, emphasizing the importance of preserving industrial lands while also planning for residential growth, ideally through mixed-use development in Priority Development Areas to support local employment and economic activity in the service and manufacturing sectors.

Participants stressed that the preservation of industrial lands is critical for maintaining job opportunities. Participants also highlighted challenges like balancing community resistance to increased density and parking reductions, as well as ensuring adequate transit infrastructure to support new developments. Other opportunities include the potential for job training and incubator programs, such as restaurants and maker spaces, which foster entrepreneurship and local business, as well as high-speed internet as an essential resource for supporting local economies.

Overall, participants agreed there is value in integrating a diversity of job sectors with transit to improve accessibility and meet the needs of lower-income populations who are less likely to own cars. In terms of prioritizing job sectors near transit, participants suggested a focus on healthcare and public agency offices, because these sectors draw large numbers of people in person, necessitating efficient transit connections. Job training and education were also noted for their predictable schedules, making them suitable for transit service. There are some

concerns about focusing too much on private employers in these locations due to the negative impact of remote work on transit ridership.

Environment

Several questions were posed to participants about how the resilience project list should be used, what is needed to support adaptation in shoreline areas with high flooding risks, and what other ways would they sort the \$95 billion need. Additional questions were asked about community parks and the ratio of park acreage per capita as well as appropriate scaling for parks.

On the topic of sea level rise, participants emphasized several considerations, including the importance of multi-jurisdictional collaboration, especially to share data and develop joint funding strategies. Acknowledging that there are funding constraints, the need exists for sustainable financial resources to support long-term resilience efforts. The feedback emphasizes prioritizing projects based on their impact on critical infrastructure, communities and economic damage, mainly focusing on vulnerable populations and environmental considerations.

Legislative integration was also discussed: to incorporate these Plan Bay Area 2050+ efforts into legislative frameworks, such as SB 272, that support local jurisdictions working together to tackle these interconnected challenges more effectively.

Regarding parks, participants emphasized several strategies, including categorizing park types to ensure parity, integrating green spaces into urban developments, and ensuring equitable access to parks for all communities – especially in underserved areas. The importance of access and proximity (and non-physical elements like maintenance and programming) were highlighted. Although the park acreage per capita was introduced as a tool to understand parity, participants said accessibility and quality are more important, as well as equity in park distribution and maintenance.