

Metropolitan Transportation Commission

Policy Advisory Council

April 26, 2024

Agenda Item 7a

2024 Equity Priority Communities Update

Subject:

Findings from efforts to refresh the region's Equity Priority Communities (EPC) data layer in 2024 for use in Plan Bay Area 2050+ and related initiatives, in advance of a broader effort to re-imagine the EPC Framework starting later this year.

Background:

Since 2001, MTC has been using data from the American Community Survey to identify communities (census tracts) that may have historically faced disadvantage and underinvestment due to their background or socioeconomic status. MTC has continually updated the framework definition — with data updated every four years — as part of updates for Plan Bay Area, the regional long-range plan. The Equity Priority Communities framework helps MTC make decisions on investments that meaningfully reverse the disparities in access to transportation, housing, and other community services. Formerly called "Communities of Concern," Equity Priority Communities are census tracts with a significant concentration of underserved populations, such as low-income households and people of color. A combination of additional factors helps define these areas.

Given that a re-envisioning process for the EPC Framework is slated to begin later in 2024, staff have continued to leverage the existing methodology approved by the Commission under MTC Resolution No. 4217, while integrating the most current data. This draft 2024 release of the updated EPCs is intended for use in Plan Bay Area 2050+ and related efforts. While the methodology remains consistent with past updates, EPC concentration thresholds have been recalculated using the most recent American Community Survey data (ACS 2018-2022).

Between the current update and the previous one, census tract boundaries have changed due to population and development patterns shifts, increasing the number of tracts identified. Though the number of EPCs in the nine-county region has increased, there has been a modest decline in the share of Bay Area census tracts identified as EPCs since the previous plan, mainly due to a continued decline in low-income households.

Attachments A and B provide further technical details on the 2024 EPC update, including crucial data considerations, demographic changes, findings, and next steps, with detailed maps at the regional and county scales included in **Attachments C and D**. Staff are seeking the Council's feedback and inquiries on the draft maps prior to finalizing 2024 EPC data layer later this spring.

Next Steps:

The draft 2024 EPC maps and supporting materials are currently available on the MTC website (<https://mtc.ca.gov/planning/transportation/access-equity-mobility/equity-priority-communities>) and are being circulated to key partners and stakeholders, including County Transportation Authorities, local jurisdictions, and community-based organizations. Staff is requesting comments on these materials by May 15, 2024. In the next few months, staff will respond to comments, questions, and clarifications and make technical adjustments as needed before finalizing and publishing materials and resources online in the late spring. The new EPC layer will be used in Plan Bay Area 2050+ Blueprint analyses and the Final Equity Analysis Report, among other essential deliverables.

Following this update in late 2024, MTC will kick off a multi-year re-envisioning of the EPC framework. This re-envisioning will conduct a complete examination of the current framework, build on the collaboration from past planning efforts, partner with key stakeholders (e.g., MTC's Policy Advisory Council, community-based organizations, historically underserved communities), and seek to address known gaps in the existing EPC methodology.

Issues:

None identified.

Recommendations:

Information.

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Technical Memo
- Attachment B: PowerPoint
- Attachment C: Draft Regional Map of 2024 EPCs
- Attachment D: Draft County-Specific Maps of 2024 EPCs