



PLAN BAY AREA 2050 +



ASSOCIATION OF BAY AREA GOVERNMENTS
METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Equity Priority Communities (EPCs): 2024 EPCs and Re-Envisioning for the Future

MTC Policy Advisory Council

October 22, 2024

Refresher: What are EPCs?

- MTC/ABAG has used census data to create and update EPCs since their inception in 1999.
- EPCs are census tracts that have a significant concentration of disadvantage “factors.”
- “Thresholds” are created to determine statistically significant concentrations for each “factor.”
- How does a tract qualify to be an EPC today¹?
 1. Meets thresholds for both people of color and low-income households
 2. Meets thresholds for both low-income households and three of any of the remaining six factors

MTC Equity Priority Community Disadvantage Factors

Low Income

People Of
Color

People With
Disabilities

Limited
English
Proficiency

Zero-Vehicle
Household

Seniors 75
Years and
Over

Single-Parent
Family

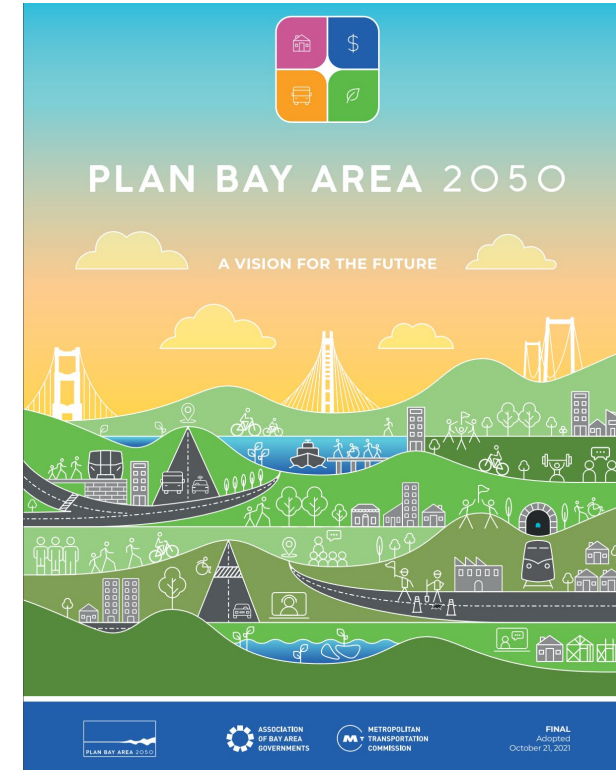
Severely Rent-
Burdened
Household

¹ The existing methodology was adopted in 2015 and developed in collaboration with MTC's Regional Equity Working Group; it has been used for each Plan Bay Area cycle since.

Background: EPCs and Plan Bay Area

The equity framework for Plan Bay Area has three components:

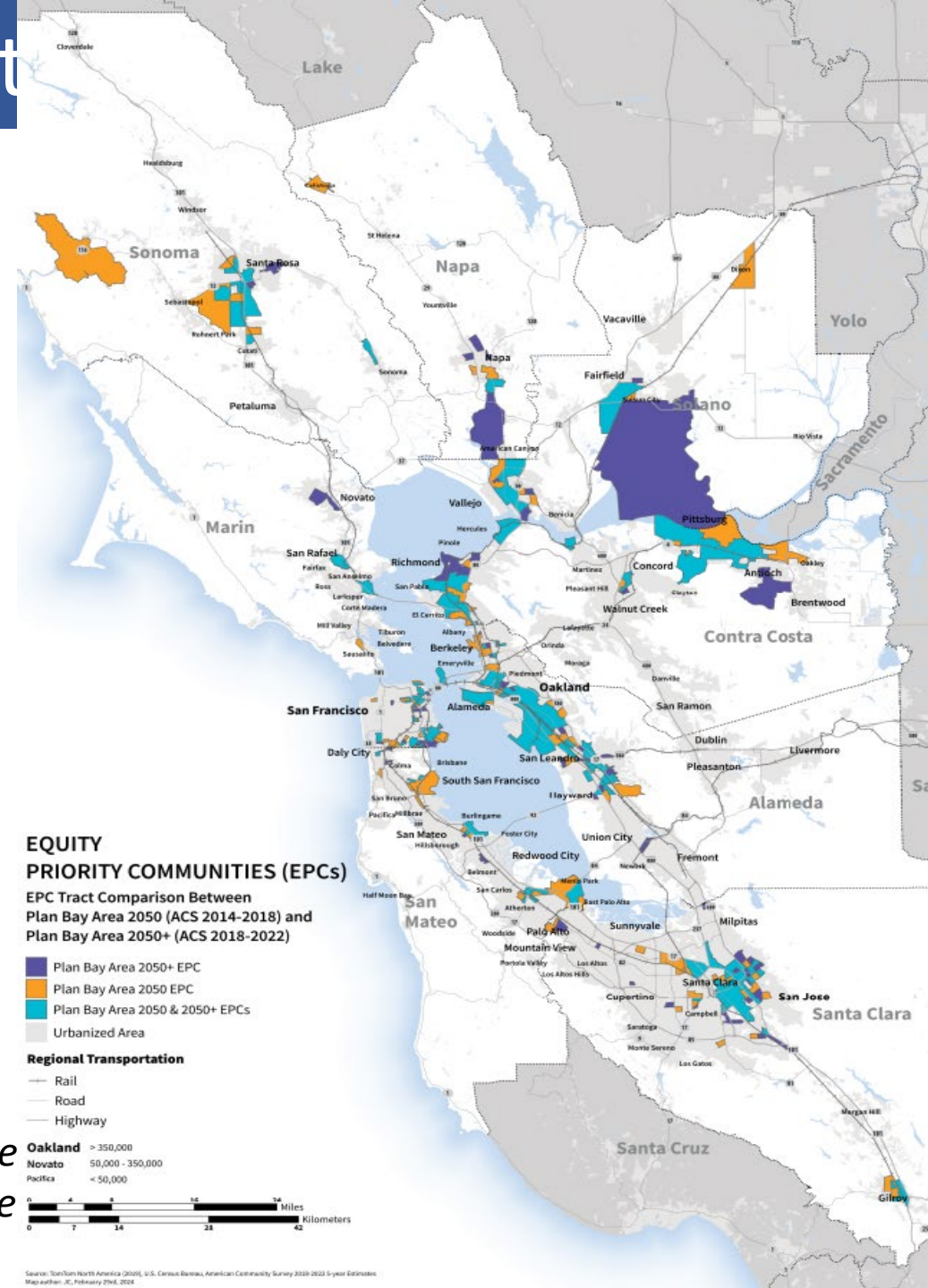
- A federally-required ***Title VI*** analysis of transportation investments to assess disparate impacts on populations of different race, color or national origin;
- A federally required ***environmental justice*** analysis of transportation investments to assess disproportionate impacts on low-income and minority populations or communities of concern; and
- A supplemental ***equity analysis*** that assesses the distribution of benefits and burdens on communities of concern in comparison to the rest of the region.
- **Note:** Federal and state planning requirements specify that MPOs should use the latest data and assumptions when developing long-range plans.



Background: Draft 2024 EPC Update

- MTC/ABAG released draft 2024 EPCs in spring 2024 for public review and comment.
- The methodology to determine whether a census tract is an EPC remained the same.
- Roughly 1 in 5 census tracts were identified as an EPC – similar to past cycles.
- The total number of EPC tracts in the region increased slightly, primarily as a result of a greater number of total tracts in the Bay Area following the 2020 Census.
- While the majority of EPCs are the same as prior cycle, demographic changes resulted in new EPCs and some tracts losing EPC status.

Note: For more detailed information regarding the Draft 2024 EPC Update, see Attachment B for materials from the April 26, 2024, Policy Advisory Committee meeting.



Comment and Feedback Themes

MTC/ABAG staff gathered comments from April 15 to May 15, 2024. The themes below reflect feedback received during the public comment period, County Transportation Agency meetings, and the Policy Advisory Council meeting on April 26, 2024.

Data Concerns

- Concerns regarding 2020 Decennial Census and 2018-2022 American Community Survey (ACS) data validity and margin of error
- Concerns about census data accurately representing vulnerable populations
- Requests that MTC consider additional data types or tools in the identification of EPCs

Planning and Funding Implications

- Concerns about the “loss” of EPC status, especially EPCs that have active planning efforts or are slated for, or seeking, investment, with special attention given to MTC’s Community Based Transportation Plan program
- Concerns that project, program, and plan lifecycles take longer than the four-year EPC update cycle
- Requests to retain past EPCs and/or pursue additive process for EPCs in funding program prioritization

Exploration Area #1: Census Data Accuracy

Key Findings:

- The United States Census Bureau (USCB) endorses the accuracy of the 2018-2022 ACS and 2020 Decennial Census.
- Margin of error is a normal outcome in any large data set.
- The latest Census/ACS data more accurately reflects Covid-era demographics for the region compared to older data from 2010 and 2014-2018.



Staff Recommendation: Use the latest available data to address federal and state planning requirements.

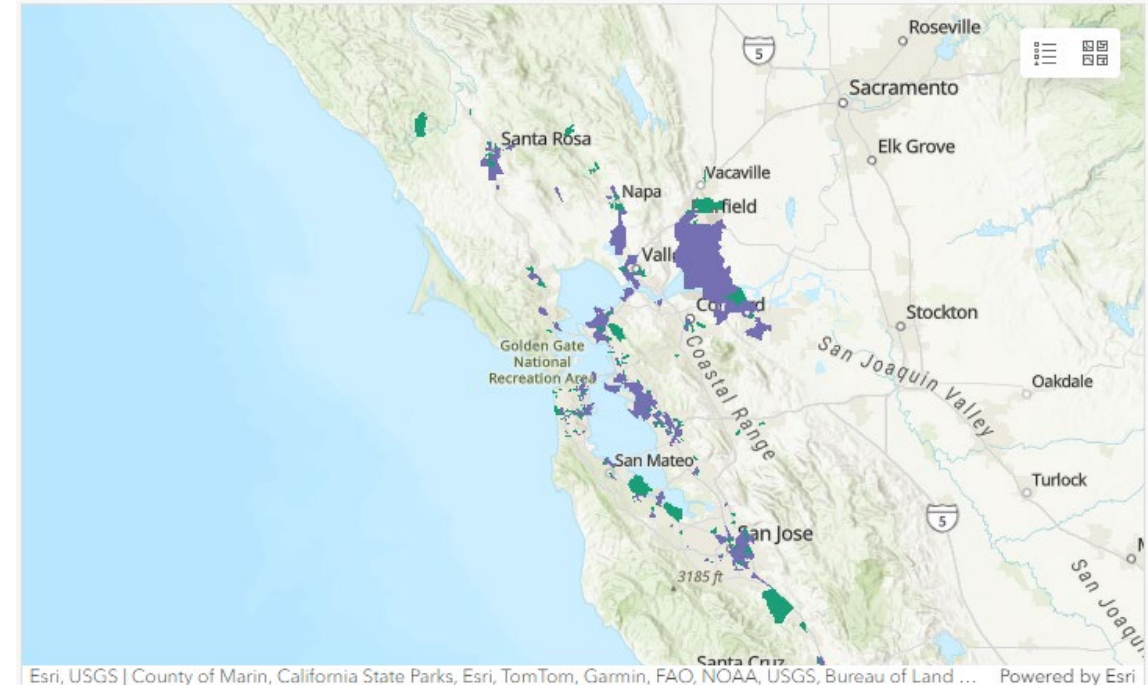
Exploration Area #2: Standard Deviation Adjustments

Key Findings:

- Staff evaluated alternatives to the standard deviation that is used to calculate EPC concentration thresholds.
- A change from 0.5 to 0.25 standard deviation yielded too broad a result.
- Greatly expanding the number of EPCs is contrary to the goal of identifying populations with moderately above-average equity needs.
- This methodology change did not bring back several notable tracts that lost EPC status.

Staff Recommendation:

Maintain the 0.5 standard deviation threshold.



EPC Tracts (.5 SD)

353


20% of Total Tracts

EPC Tracts (.25 SD)

474

27% of Total Tracts

EPC Population (.5

 **1.5M**

20% of Regional Population

EPC Population (.25

 **2M**

26% of Regional Population

Exploration Area #3: Alternative Data Tools

Key Findings:

- Staff reviewed various federal, state, and regional equity tools as potential alternatives to MTC/ABAG's EPC framework.
- Equity tools vary greatly, and each come with their own pros and cons; no single tool solved the concerns on its own.
- Introducing a new tool and associated methodology as part of the plan update could result in unintended consequences.

Federal, State, and Regional Equity Tools

Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST)

Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool (EJ Screen)

USDOT Equitable Transportation Community (ETC Explorer)

CalEnviroScreen 4.0

BAAQMD Frontline Communities Map

BCDC Adapting to Rising Tides Community Vulnerability

Staff Recommendation:

Continue using the existing board-approved EPC methodology for Plan Bay Area 2050+; comprehensively evaluate additional data types and alternative tools as part of forthcoming EPC Re-Envisioning.

Exploration Area #4: Funding Program Flexibility

Key Findings: EPC considerations in transportation grant programs include broad flexibility for defining project benefits, including alternative designations and/or priorities.

Funding Programs with MTC EPC Consideration

• Regional

- One Bay Area Grant (OBAG 3)
- Regional Active Transportation Program (ATP)
- Regional Early Action Planning (REAP 2)
- Safe Routes to Transit – Bay Trail (SR2TBT)

• State

- State Active Transportation Program (ATP)
- Senate Bill 1 (SB1) Competitive Programs
- Local Transportation Climate Adaptation Program (LTCAP)
- Port and Freight Infrastructure Program (PFIP)

• Federal – *no applicable programs*



Staff Recommendation:

- Assess how regional funding programs can best identify and prioritize the needs of priority populations.
- Consider input received to date during the development of future grant programs and recommend policy changes, as appropriate.

Exploration Area #5: Community Based Transportation Plans (CBTPs)

Key Findings:

- CBTPs were established in 2002 to support collaborative planning in historically underserved communities.
- CBTPs identify priority needs and projects to direct local investments.
- Under current CBTP guidelines, plan areas must contain EPCs or locally-designated transportation disadvantaged areas (TDAs)
 - OBAG 3 funds for planning and implementation



Photo: Noah Berger

Staff Recommendation: Continue to recognize the importance of prior CBTP efforts as priorities for funding and further explore how to best support implementation of existing CBTPs.

EPC Re-Envisioning

- In early 2025, MTC will kick off a multi-year effort to re-envision the EPC framework.
- This effort will comprehensively and collaboratively investigate many of the concern areas raised by partners, including:
 - Working with historically underserved communities to better identify needs and values.
 - Investigating and addressing concerns with the existing framework and methodology.

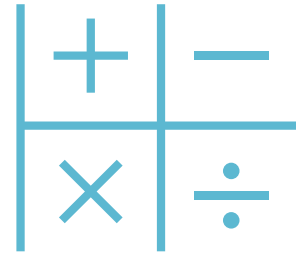
Goals and Approach:

Equity-Centered Community Design



- Engage diverse stakeholders
- Learn from historical impacts
- Identify gaps and opportunities

Updated Methodology



- Explore new opportunities for disaggregation and intersectionality
- Incorporate the Bay Area's unique local context
- Utilize latest research

Modernized Data Tool



- Develop a user-friendly interface
- Enhance public communications and information

Next Steps and Project Timeline

Fall 2024

- Update on 2024 EPCs to MTC Planning Committee and ABAG Administrative Committee
- Respond to comments



Early 2025

Final Blueprint Adoption (January), use 2024 EPCs for plan equity analysis



2025-2026

EPC
Re-Envisioning

What does this mean for existing EPCs?

- Plan Bay Area 2050 EPCs will remain in place until the next plan (Plan Bay Area 2050+) is adopted.
- Plan Bay Area 2050+ EPCs will take effect in late 2025 until potentially late 2029, *pending the outcome and adoption of the EPC Re-Envisioning.*



Questions and Comments

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