

**Metropolitan Transportation Commission and Association of Bay Area Governments
MTC Planning Committee and ABAG Administrative Committee**

December 13, 2024

Agenda Item 7a

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

Subject:

Summary of feedback received on 2024 EPCs prior to finalization for use in Plan Bay Area 2050+, while also introducing the EPC Re-Envisioning effort slated to commence in early 2025.

Background:

In April 2024, MTC/ABAG released the Draft 2024 EPC Update intended for use in Plan Bay Area 2050+ and related efforts. The methodology for the Draft 2024 EPC Update remained consistent with past updates, with EPC concentration thresholds recalculated using the most recent American Community Survey data (ACS 2018-2022). Since the last update to EPC maps, census tract boundaries were updated by the U.S. Census Bureau due to population shifts, increasing the number of tracts identified. Though the number of EPCs in the nine-county region increased, there had 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. While the majority of EPCs were the same as prior cycle, demographic changes during and after the pandemic resulted in new EPCs as well as some tracts losing EPC status on the preliminary Draft 2024 EPC map. This item summarizes feedback received during the comment period for the calendar year 2024 update to the MTC/ABAG Equity Priority Communities (EPCs), as well as responses to key concerns posed by stakeholders prior to finalization.

Summary of Feedback and Staff Recommendation:

In spring 2024, staff released the Draft 2024 EPC Update, initiating a 30-day comment period. Staff also convened targeted discussions with county transportation agencies and presented the update's findings to the MTC Policy Advisory Council during their April 26th meeting. Stakeholder feedback mostly focused on two broad topic areas: data concerns and potential impacts on planning and funding processes. Across all themes was the core concern that the loss of EPC status for a given census tract would yield adverse effects on impacted communities related to planning, funding programs, and project delivery. Most of the recommendations posed

by stakeholders requested that MTC/ABAG consider methodology changes to address data concerns, utilize previous census data, or otherwise modify the approach for identifying EPCs. After exploring several approaches to address comment feedback areas, MTC/ABAG conducted a second round of engagement and outreach on the 2024 Draft EPC update during the fall, presenting initial findings and recommendations to County Transportation Agencies (CTAs) and at the October 22nd meeting of the Policy Advisory Council. Stakeholders continued to express ongoing concerns regarding planning and funding implications for census tracts previously identified as EPCs using pre-pandemic data. These partners continued to recommend that staff incorporate Plan Bay Area 2050 EPCs in the final Plan Bay Area 2050+ map, in addition to maintaining EPCs newly identified with the latest Census data.

Considering these ongoing concerns and feedback, staff are recommending that EPCs identified with 2014-2018 ACS data, as well as EPCs identified with 2018-2022 ACS data, be incorporated into a single, consolidated Plan Bay Area 2050+ Equity Priority Communities Map. This will ensure that no census tracts “lose” EPC status as part of the limited and focused update, while still maintaining the existing, board-approved methodology for identifying EPCs. Operationally, this will require staff to analyze both data vintages separately as part of the Plan Bay Area 2050+ performance and equity analyses as well as supplemental reports to fulfill federal requirements to use the latest data and assumptions. Staff believe this approach should address stakeholder concerns regarding planning and funding implications, while also allowing the plan to continue meeting Title VI and Environmental Justice requirements. **Attachment B** includes the final proposed 2024 Equity Priority Communities Map.

EPC Re-Envisioning and Next Steps:

Early next year, MTC/ABAG will kick off a multi-year re-envisioning of the EPC framework. Recognizing the concerns expressed by stakeholders regarding the 2024 EPC update, staff are committed to re-examining how future long-range planning efforts recognize and elevate the needs of priority populations. This re-envisioning will conduct a complete examination of the current framework and its limitations, 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. For more background and information on the EPC Re-Envisioning, please see **Attachment A**. Staff will continue to provide updates to the MTC Planning Committee and ABAG Administrative Committee as the re-envisioning proceeds.

In terms of immediate next steps, the MTC Commission and ABAG Executive Board are anticipated to consider approval of Plan Bay Area 2050+ Final Blueprint in early 2025. The Final Blueprint will leverage the consolidated 2024 EPCs to support further modeling and analysis of the benefits and burdens of the long-range plan, including priority populations.

Issues:

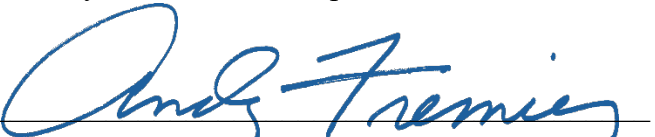
None identified.

Recommendations:

Information.

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Presentation
- Attachment B: Proposed 2024 Equity Priority Communities Map



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