



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Association of Bay Area Governments

May 21, 2026

Palo Alto Levee Tour

On April 24, President Ramos and Chief Deputy Executive Director Alix Bockelman joined San Francisco Estuary Partnership (SFEP) Director Caitlin Sweeney, board member and San Mateo County Supervisor Lisa Gauthier and a host of other elected officials on a Save the Bay-led tour of the Palo Alto Horizontal Levee Pilot project site. The group learned more about this innovative nature-based flood resilience project and discussed ways elected officials can get involved in future projects. Attendees were also invited to join a planting exercise led by Save the Bay. The organization is working to install 3,000 native plants on the levee throughout the year.

San Pablo Baylands Restoration Projects Selected for EPA Funding

Two integrated ecological enhancements to the San Pablo Baylands that are part of the State Route 37 Sears Point to Mare Island Improvement Project have been selected to receive funding from the US Environmental Protection Agency, the first environmental funds for this project. Through ABAG, SFEP has been selected to receive \$13.9 million over two years for Strip Marsh East restoration and related sediment work, and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) has been selected to receive \$9.6 million for Tolay Creek sediment excavation and reuse. The Tolay Creek project also received its San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission permit through a unanimous vote. The permit is an important project milestone, moving it closer to construction and delivering critical improvements to transportation and ecological resources.

These projects are part of the region's efforts to reduce flood risk on SR 37 and restore tidal marsh between the highway and San Pablo Bay.

SFEP'S partnership with the Bay Area Clean Water Association on a \$4.8 million grant to advance nutrient management through nature-based solutions in the east and south bays was also selected for funding from US EPA.

American Planning Association Recognizes ABAG-MTC With Awards

Three projects with ties to ABAG and MTC have received awards from the Northern California chapter of the American Planning Association (APA), recognizing work across



the technical assistance and housing portfolios. The awards will be distributed at the APA NorCal awards gala in the fall.

The Regional Housing Technical Assistance (RHTA) Program received a Communications Initiative and Outreach Award of Merit (second place) for the [Welcome home! Housing in our Community](#) toolkit. These resources provide planners and other public sector staff with creative, approachable public engagement materials for conversations about housing. (<https://abag.ca.gov/technical-assistance/welcome-home-housing-our-community>)

Two projects funded by the Bay Area Housing Finance Authority Priority Sites Loan Program also won awards:

- Lake Merritt BART Station Area Plan received an Implementation Award of Merit (second place). This award highlights the Oakland Chinatown neighborhood for its early and ongoing community engagement processes, with over \$1 billion in community investment since the plan was adopted in 2014. Priority Sites funding supported the construction of 97 apartments for seniors and formerly-homeless people in the Chinatown Senior Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) project.
- North Berkeley BART TOD received an Urban Design Award of Excellence (first place). This award honors the community advocacy, objective design standards, City of Berkeley’s first-ever AB 2011 entitlements, and the design team’s master plan.

BayREN Marks Major Milestones

In April, the Bay Area Regional Energy Network (BayREN) released the [2025 Annual Report: Designed for People, Powered by Local Solutions](#), highlighting a year of locally driven energy efficiency programs that supported homeowners, renters, businesses and local governments in saving energy, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and lowering utility costs. The report also reflects the evolution of BayREN’s portfolio in 2025, including the launch of two new programs focused on expanding affordability and access.

Earlier in March, BayREN submitted its 2028–2035 Business Plan to the California Public Utilities Commission for approval. The Plan proposes a portfolio of 10 regional programs and one statewide program, expands workforce education and training and creates new opportunities for local governments and community-based organizations to pilot community-designed energy solutions. Sixty-six percent of the proposed budget is dedicated to households and communities that have historically faced barriers to



participation. More information is available at <https://www.bayren.org/news/bayrens-2025-success-and-its-2028-2035-plan-climate-communities-and-health>.

Call for Applications: Powering Regional Priorities Through Community Leadership

Please help spread the word that applications are open for the Community Action Resource Empowerment (CARE) Power-Building and Engagement Learning Lab. This is a first-of-its-kind, six-month learning community designed to place community-based organizations at the center of regional change. Up to 20 community-based organizations (two staff per CBO) will be selected to participate.

The Learning Lab blends in-person convenings, virtual learning, real-world project implementation and direct investment to equip local leaders with the tools to shape equitable outcomes in land use, transportation, housing and climate. Applications are due Sunday, May 31. Find more information and the application at [CARE Pb+E: Learning Lab](https://mtc.ca.gov/funding/funding-opportunities/community-action-resource-empowerment-care-program/care-power-building-and-engagement-pbe-program). (<https://mtc.ca.gov/funding/funding-opportunities/community-action-resource-empowerment-care-program/care-power-building-and-engagement-pbe-program>)

ABAG Hosting Seismic Workshop on June 17

On June 17, staff will host an in-person afternoon seismic workshop for local building and community development staff to strengthen the Bay Area's earthquake resilience. In 2016 and 2017, ABAG released guidance to help cities develop ordinances for multi-family soft-story buildings — some of the most vulnerable structures in a major quake. Attendees will hear lessons learned from cities that recently developed their soft-story ordinances, including San José, Palo Alto, Albany and Mill Valley. Staff will also release updated guidance based on new interviews and recent ordinance development. Please share this event with your community development directors and chief building officials. (https://www.eventbrite.com/e/abag-planning-earthquake-resilient-cities-workshop-tickets-1986579264056?aff=oddtcreator&keep_tld=true)

Summer Academy Receives Record Number of Applications

Over 500 high school students applied to join the 2026 Norman Mineta Bay Area High School Summer Academy, a record number of applicants. The Academy is a paid program that introduces students to public sector career pathways through exposure to regional policy issues such as transportation planning, housing, environmental justice and air quality management through interactive sessions with partner agencies. You're invited to join us for the student capstone presentation event on Friday, July 31 at 12 p.m. Please email academy@bayareametro.gov to confirm your attendance.



May is Bike to Wherever Days and Affordable Housing Month

Nearly 20,000 riders participated in Bike to Wherever Day on Thursday, May 14. So far this month, more than 800 people have pledged to ride and logged more than 70,000 miles. There's still time to participate – you can see the full event calendar at <https://www.bayareabiketowork.com/event-information/calendar>.
<https://ridewithgps.com/challenges/32769>

May is also Affordable Housing Month, when allies and advocates connect to build support for affordable housing and share its impacts on advancing healthy, thriving communities. Events are happening throughout the region, and you can find more information at <https://www.affordablehousingmonth.org/new-events>.

Bay Area Celebrates Climate Week

April 18-26, [San Francisco Climate Week](#) brought together thousands of attendees for over 100 environment-focused events and learning sessions. MTC, SFEP, BayREN, the Bay Area Conservation & Development Commission and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District teamed up to host the Climate Action Playbook series consisting of a walking tour, innovation expo and several presentations. The collective events drew nearly 490 participants. Additionally, SFEP Director Caitlin Sweeney participated in a panel at the ICF Climate Breakfast exploring regional collaboration and resilience planning. Read more about the events on the [ABAG news page](#).
(<https://abag.ca.gov/news/mtc-sfep-barc-share-their-climate-action-playbook-years-sf-climate-week>)

Replacement Housing Webinar

More than 200 housing staff from communities across the Bay Area attended the RHTA Program's March 26 webinar for an overview of replacement housing requirements under state density bonus law, Housing Element law and the Housing Crisis Act of 2019 (SB 330). State law requires that if a project proposes to demolish residential units, it must construct the same number of units as are being demolished. Staff from Goldfarb and Lipman LLP walked through the legal requirements governing replacement housing, followed by a panel with staff from the city of Mountain View and consultants discussing common implementation challenges, strategies jurisdictions are using to comply and new tools available to support compliance. The webinar and recording are available at <https://abag.ca.gov/technical-assistance/replacement-housing-webinar-resources>.



Save the Date for the General Assembly

A reminder to save the date for the ABAG General Assembly on Thursday, June 18. The event will be held here at the Bay Area Metro Center and will include a breakfast keynote speech from Libby Schaaf, President and CEO of the Bay Area Council and former mayor of the City of Oakland, a high-level overview of the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) 7 process and guest speakers from several local jurisdictions. Please register at <https://luma.com/ogc3mkvs>. I look forward to seeing you there.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew B. Fremier".

Andrew B. Fremier
Executive Director