

Under Construction: New Regional Transportation Plan



Like parents trying to fit a new roof and a child's braces into the routine expenses of grocery bills and new shoes, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) is trying to budget for meeting the region's transportation needs over the next 25 years. The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is scheduled to be updated by the end of the year; the first draft of the new plan, together with a draft Environmental Impact Report, will be in circulation in August. The Plan will address the maintenance, management and improvement of the Bay Area transportation network, including transit, highways, airports, seaports, railroads, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Projects must be included in the RTP to be eligible to receive federal or state transportation funds for planning or construction.

Since the beginning of the year, MTC has been explaining the framework within which the planning decisions must be made and gathering comments on what those decisions should look like. Much of the money which MTC spends or distributes to other transportation agencies is constrained, meaning that it is already earmarked for certain types of uses, primarily maintenance and operation of the existing transportation system. Only 9 percent of the funds, \$7.7 billion, is available for other options, and it is not enough to purchase everything in the region's large catalog of new transportation projects. How the discretionary money is spent has a significant influence on the region, as a project in the RTP is funded while another project, not in the plan, may never be built.

The RTP is limited to projects that can be built with the funding which is currently available, from federal and state transportation funds or local sales tax measures. Because of the scarcity of funding and the long timeline on transportation planning, MTC considers all proposals submitted by transit agencies, county Congestion Management Agencies (CMAs), and MTC staff. Projects with commitments from projected available funding are designated as Track 1 and those on the "waiting list", requiring identification of new funding, as Track 2. While Track 2 projects are not eligible for the funding available through the RTP process, they are acknowledged to be next in line when new funding becomes available. During the last update of the RTP, strong lobbying by transit advocates led the Commission to move some highway and road projects from Track 1 to Track 2, shifting Track 1 funds to cover all of the shortfall between operating expenses and subsidies for the region's transit agencies.

Track 2 projects, grouped by mode or region, were included in MTC's 2000 Bay Area Transportation Blueprint for the 21st Century, which was used to lobby for additional funding. The Blueprint supported advocacy for several Bay Area projects ultimately included in Governor Davis's January 2000 budget proposal for his Transportation for Congestion Relief Program. Funding for BART to San Jose, Caltrain improvements, a regional express bus program and various highway improvements was included in the Governor's program.

(continued on page 10)

INSIDE:

- 2 Update: Regional Growth Planning
 - 3 Green Gas: Biodiesel
 - 4 Grazing: A Useful Tool for Park Management
 - 5 From the Editor: Survey Results
 - 6 Bright Ideas: Techno-Traffic
 - 7 Bright Ideas: Driving on Air; Still Going; Our Kinder, Gentler Streets; This Ride Brought to You By...
 - 8 Bright Ideas: Getting Around; No Mo' Lawn; Good Neighbors; Odds & Ends
 - 9 Nice to Know: Milestones; Awards; Rail-Volution
 - 12 Index of Previous Issues
-
-

Update: Regional Growth Planning

Sustainable development. Smart growth. Livable communities. It's time for the people of the Bay Area who will put these concepts into practice to join the discussions which have been going on among leaders of governmental agencies and community groups.

Guidelines for sustainable development, incorporated in the Draft Compact for a Sustainable Bay Area, are now in circulation for review and feedback by individuals, groups and local governments and agencies. The Draft Compact was designed by the Bay Area Alliance for Sustainable Development, a partnership of 45 environmental groups, businesses, social equity organizations, and government agencies (*see March/April 1998 issue*). It integrates the three Es of sustainable development: economy, environment and equity. The compact is available on the Alliance website, <http://www.BayAreaAlliance.org> or by calling 510-464-7978 (ABAG).

The Alliance has merged its Regional Livability Footprint Project with another regional smart growth planning effort called the Bay Area Smart Growth Strategy (*see August/September 2001 issue*). This effort is being led jointly by the five regional agencies: Association of Bay Area Governments, Metropolitan Transportation Commission, Bay Area Air Quality Management District, Bay Conservation and Development Commission, and Regional Water Quality Control Board. Members of these agencies are working through a Steering Committee to involve local governments, stakeholder groups and other residents. The project aims to identify:

- * the most appropriate location for future growth
- * the character and design of new development which can enhance existing communities
- * regulatory changes and incentives needed so that communities, developers, neighborhood groups and others are willing to accept this growth.

Saturday workshops are scheduled in every county during September and October:

<u>County</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>
Alameda	Sept. 8	San Leandro Public Library, Main Branch (300 Estudillo Ave.)
Contra Costa (tentative)	Oct. 6	Dean Leshner Regional Center for the Arts (1601 Civic Dr. at Locust, Walnut Creek)
Marin	Sept. 29	Pickleweed Community Center (50 Canal St., San Rafael)
Napa	Oct. 6	Rutherford Grange (Highway 29, Rutherford)
San Mateo	Sept. 29	SamTrans Headquarters (1250 San Carlos Ave. at Laurel Street, San Carlos)
San Francisco	Oct. 13	San Francisco County - location TBD
Santa Clara	Oct. 13	County Government Center (70 West Hedding St. at North First St., San Jose)
Solano	Sept. 22	City Hall. Suisun City (701 Civic Center Blvd. Suisun City, off Hwy 12 at Todd Park)
Sonoma	Sept. 22	Santa Rosa Junior College (1501 Mendocino Ave., Santa Rosa)

For more information about participating in the Smart Growth/Footprint process: <http://www.abag.ca.gov/planning/smartgrowth/>; e-mail smartgrowth@abag.ca.gov; phone Victoria Eisen, ABAG, 510-464-7960.

Bay Area Monitor
Tamra C. Hege,
LWVBA President;
Leslie Stewart, Editor;
A-Mailing and Printing,
Concord.

The *Bay Area Monitor* is produced as an educational project by the LWVBA. It is supported by the Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District, Bay Area Air Quality Management District, Bay Area Rapid Transit District, East Bay Municipal Utility District, East Bay Regional Park District, Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District, Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the Port of Oakland, the Peninsula Joint Powers Board (Caltrain) and the San Mateo County Transit District.

The *Bay Area Monitor* provides an impartial, independent view of agency decisions and activities and other

important Bay Area issues. Material and viewpoints are chosen by LWVBA to provide a comprehensive view of regional topics. Information is gathered from many sources; LWVBA is not responsible for their accuracy.

Permission is granted to copy this publication in whole or in part as long as material is credited to the *Bay Area Monitor* of the LWVBA. For further information contact: LWVBA (925) 283-7093, fax (925)283-2613. E-mail: monitor@lwvba-ca.org

The Monitor is online at <http://www.bayareamonitor.org>



Recyclable and
Printed on
Recycled Paper

Green Gas: Biodiesel

Occasionally a fresh idea breaks into such mundane activities as developing improved motor vehicle fuels. Such was the case when "Mc-Diesel", a biodiesel fuel made from used oil from fast food restaurants, was added to the array of alternative fuels. Then, in 1997, Joshua and Kaia Tickell of Louisiana embarked on a 10,000-mile tour of the United States in their three-ton motor home, "Veggie Van." Tickell had been making home-made biodiesel in what he calls his Green Grease machine, and the "Veggie Van" towed a portable Green Grease Machine. Stopping at fast food restaurants to collect used oil for making the biodiesel which was their only fuel, the Tickells and their "Veggie Van" got media attention and caught the popular imagination.

Biodiesel, composed of alkyl esters of fatty acids, is manufactured from new and used vegetable oils and animal fats and recycled grease, by a process of transesterification. The oil most commonly used in the U.S. is soybean oil. Soybeans have been overproduced, surpluses exist, and prices are declining. To make biodiesel, the oil or fat is filtered, then treated with alkali to break it down into fatty acids and glycerol. Then it is combined with methanol or ethanol, which reacts with the fatty acids to form methyl or ethyl esters. The two are separated, the esters being used for fuel and the glycerol for pharmaceuticals and cosmetics.

Biodiesel can be used by itself to fuel diesel engines (100 % biodiesel) or, more commonly, as an additive to petroleum diesel, usually at the 20 percent level (B20). Engines do not need to be modified to burn biodiesel. Biodiesels made from different oils will consist of different esters, depending upon the fatty acid compositions of the oils. However, the energy content is roughly the same, which is slightly lower than that of petroleum diesel, meaning that it delivers fewer miles per gallon. Because biodiesel has a higher flash point and, hence, is less flammable, it is safer to handle and store than petroleum diesel.

The Department of Energy's Office of Fuels Development is working through the National Biofuels Program to make biofuels, which are manufactured from renewable resources, a significant part of the

nation's energy market. The National Renewable Energy Laboratory's Biodiesel Project is conducting research to develop fuel standards, test performance, improve technologies, and increase the market share for biodiesel.

Beginning in April 2001, federal, state, and alternative fuel provider fleets that are required under the federal Energy Policy Act (EPA) to purchase alternative fuel vehicles may be given credit for using biodiesel. EPA's intent is to replace 30 percent of petroleum-based fuels in the transportation sector with domestically produced alternative fuels by 2010. The goal is to decrease the nation's dependence on foreign oil and to increase energy security.

Like other alternative fuels, biodiesel emits less air pollution than petroleum fuels. The emissions reductions are roughly proportional to the amount of biodiesel in the fuel. Biodiesel contains no sulfur and therefore emits no sulfur oxides or sulfate aerosols. It has a higher cetane rating (analogous to octane ratings for gasoline) than petroleum diesel. Because of its oxygen content, it not only burns more completely, but enhances the combustion of petroleum diesel. This tends to reduce emissions of hydrocarbons, carbon monoxide, soot and other particulate matter, and toxics such as benzene. Smoke, soot deposits, and odors are reduced. Nitrogen oxides emissions, however, are slightly increased because the high temperature and more complete combustion of the fuel causes more nitrogen from the air to be burned. Reliable quantitative data have not yet been developed, and some information on environmental effects is anecdotal. Nonetheless, the evidence points to substantial clean air and health benefits from using biodiesel.

In the Bay Area, biodiesel is most widely used as a fuel for sailboat auxiliary engines. In the future, the marine market is expected to extend to other types of vessels. When used in marine engines, biodiesel is faster starting than petroleum diesel and emits less unburned fuel into the water. In the case of spills, biodiesel is biodegradable and

(continued on page 11)

For more information: The best sources of information are online. We recommend typing "biodiesel" into a Web browser such as Google.



Grazing: A Useful Tool for Park Management

If cows aren't wild animals, do they belong in parks? Despite complaints that cattle trample plants and wetlands and are more characteristic of farms than of wilderness, the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) recently concluded that grazing has many benefits for parks if carefully managed. In its final report to the district board, the Grazing Review Task Force concluded that under the proper conditions, grazing was an appropriate tool to preserve certain types of habitat and reduce fire danger.

Park users and environmental organizations have expressed concern that cattle foul streams, damage trails and streambanks, cause erosion, and destroy vegetation. They are distressed by encounters with grazing animals as they hike and camp, and dismayed at finding flattened plants, bare cropped hillsides, and manure on trails and in streams and ponds. The practice has been supported by ranchers and firefighters, who maintain that grazing reduces dry vegetation subject to fires, and is a traditional use of open spaces in the Bay Area, contributing to the survival of ranching in the region.

The district's Grazing Review Task Force was established in Spring 2000 to fully explore this complex issue. It included three board members and five members of the district's Park Advisory Committee. Through public hearings, workshops and field trips, the group gathered comments from park users, scientists, ranchers, fire departments and other public agencies.

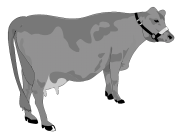
The Task Force found that cattle grazing is a management tool. While overgrazing, or otherwise inadequate program management, could have a negative impact on parkland resources, a well-regulated program is an appropriate method to maintain a diverse parkland with many habitat types, including substantial areas of grassland. Grasslands are important because they "preserve the visual quality of parklands, reduce the hazard of wildfires and provide open areas for the health and well-being of native plants and wildlife that depend on open grassland environments." In addition, "the habitat conditions maintained by cattle grazing support many notable wildlife species including golden eagle, San Joaquin kit fox, California red-

legged frog, California tiger salamander, and burrowing owl."

Through field trips and input from biologists and park staff, the Task Force learned that where park users see muddy ponds and streams with trampled edges and few plants, endangered species such as the California red-legged frog and tiger salamander are happy with the open water areas devoid of cattails and tule reeds. Ground squirrels, which enjoy open areas where cattle have grazed, are food for the San Joaquin kit fox and golden eagle, and provide burrow spaces used by red-legged frogs and burrowing owls. With the original native grazers gone from the region, cattle are needed to keep some of the grasslands open, and to crop the non-native grasses which compete with the native species.

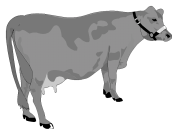
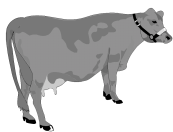
Reducing fire hazards is a major concern for EBRPD. Uncontrolled fires damage or destroy park resources, and pose dangers to nearby development. Grazing is one of several "vegetation management" techniques which are aimed at fire suppression. Others are controlled burns, mechanical removal of vegetation for firebreaks, and use of chemical or biological controls. Each has advantages and disadvantages. For example, herbicides are locally effective, but expensive and potentially harmful to wildlife. Creating firebreaks can be expensive if done by hand, while mechanical equipment can be disruptive to wildlife, and the broken soil areas are hospitable to weeds and may cause erosion. Despite problems with trampling, properly managed grazing can be extremely cost-effective and works with many different types of vegetation. The Task Force was told that other park districts which discontinued grazing found that other fire suppression methods are not totally satisfactory, and some have reinstated limited grazing.

The Task Force report stressed that careful management was essential to keeping grazing a desirable use for park lands. A key part of this is adequate monitoring to determine when grazing is damaging desirable native grasses, wildflowers and other wildlife, so cattle can be moved to other areas. Fencing is needed to keep cattle out of wetlands and away from streambanks, although it



For more information:

Tom Mikkelson,
EBRPD, 510-635-
0138 ext. 2301



may be desirable to let them graze near ponds at certain times to control unwanted plant growth. In some areas, it may be preferable to use sheep or goats, instead of cattle.

In addition, there needs to be additional sensitivity to potential conflicts between grazing animals and park users. One recommendation, already implemented, was to allow individual park supervisors, in consultation with the district's Stewardship Department, to take full responsibility for making all day-to-day grazing management decisions in their parks. This means that if a park supervisor notes excessive trampling, or notes that large numbers of hikers are choosing to hike through an area used for grazing, cattle can be shifted to other, more appropriate areas.

As the Task Force learned more about the various considerations which determine when and where grazing is desirable, the group became aware that many park users did not fully understand the issue either. Therefore, it recommended an expanded public information program to educate the public about grasslands, grazing, and use of parks where grazing is allowed, including annual field trips to learn about grassland management.

In June, the EBRPD board approved the Task Force recommendations and directed staff to bring the proposed Native Grassland Monitoring and Restoration Action Plan back to the board in August. The Action Plan is aimed at assessing the effectiveness of restoration techniques for native grasslands, followed by development of a long-term restoration program for EBRPD native grassland areas. The initial step would be a pilot study in 2002 to evaluate restoration techniques at three to five selected park sites. Techniques would include grazing by sheep, goats or cattle, controlled burns, mowing, and biological controls, singly or in combination. The results would be incorporated into a long-term plan for restoration district-wide.

Sometime in the future, the long-term plan for grassland restoration may change the way grazing is allowed in parks, or may eliminate it altogether. Until then, the varied wildlife of the East Bay parklands will occasionally be joined by the not-so-wild, but useful, domestic cow. *Leslie Stewart*

From the Editor



I want to personally thank each of you who returned a survey from the April/May Monitor. We received many positive messages, and some critical but helpful comments.

One thing we learned is actually not very surprising. I suspect that most of you have never read the fine print at the bottom of page 2—what those in the newspaper business call the “masthead”, which tells about how we see our mission as a publication, and who is responsible for making it happen—but it holds some of the answers to the comments we received from you. Most of you who responded were interested in reading about transportation and transit, followed by regional planning. We're glad, because that's a major part of our focus! We try to bring you coverage of regional topics—either those which are the business of one or more regional agencies, like transportation or air quality, or those which have regionwide application and are in some way linked to local or regional government, such as water supply.

You have a wide range of other interests, however, which we cover seldom if at all, ranging from cellular antennas and wireless planning to legislative and legal issues, from hazardous site clean-ups to economic development. For example, state tax reform would be a topic we would cover only if we could talk about specific impacts on the region, particularly impacts on local or regional government such as the ability or need to provide services.

Some of the issues which are of concern to you, such as education or housing, have no regional agency devoted to them. Since housing is tied to land use and transportation, we sometimes have relevant articles, but we leave education to others. Our “Bright Ideas”, which are featured again in this issue, represent an attempt to look at the broader range of topics which we know are of interest.

We learned that most of you don't know about our website, at www.bayareamonitor.org, which has current and back issues of the Monitor. We'll start publicizing that resource better, starting with that bold type we just used. We are also going to work at making the Website more dynamic, and that may be where we put features such as letters to the editor, updates, and calendar items, which are either too lengthy or too time-sensitive to fit in our print editions. For those of you who missed the survey, we plan to put it online also, so you don't have to wait another four years for the opportunity to give us your comments. We are always interested in those comments—the relevant information on how to reach us is in that fine print on page 2.

Leslie Stewart



Bright Ideas



Techno-Traffic

Despite the fervent wishes of thousands of gridlocked drivers, there are not yet any automatically-guided chains of commute vehicles travelling from suburbs to inner cities every morning. However, Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) technology is finally beginning to fulfill its early promise and become a part of the everyday transportation scene.

Small FasTrak transponders now speed commuters across Bay Area bridges, paying tolls electronically. In a few months, transit agencies around the region will begin the initial tests of TransLink, which will do much the same thing for transit riders. A universal fare card, good on all the systems using TransLink, will be picked up by sensors mounted on faregates and transit vehicles and automatically debited for the correct fare. Ticket machines will be able to add credit to a card, using cash or a credit card, so that one card can be re-used and re-used again.

Meanwhile, systems similar to FasTrak are allowing toll authorities in other areas to offer lower tolls at non-peak travel times. In San Diego, solo drivers with transponders can pay to use excess carpool/bus lane capacity. The fee changes based on traffic demand, and is used to support transit service.

Many communities in the Bay Area are already using pedestrian walk signals that count down the number of seconds remaining to safely finish crossing. In Tucson, sensors determine if pedestrians or bicycles are using a crosswalk, and lengthen traffic lights accordingly.

Traffic lights can also be bus-friendly, keeping a light green to let a bus move through, or changing from red to green as a bus approaches. This technology, seen as essential to speedy express bus service, will also be used in San Jose for emergency vehicles. A variant uses a combination of traffic signal priority and specially designed lanes to take buses around traffic at intersections. When an approaching bus is detected, traffic in a right-turn lane is given an early green light to allow the bus to move forward to the intersection. At the next cycle, the bus is given a signal early, and moves

forward to another short right lane, then merges left in front of other traffic just getting the green light.

Global Positioning System (GPS) monitors now allow transit districts to determine the exact location of transit vehicles, which assists in scheduling and also contributes data to a growing array of "real time" transit information techniques. Districts can offer "real time" transit information through computers, telephones, pagers, cell phones and handheld computers, variable message signs or kiosks. Travelers can check for information before leaving home, at work, at transit stations or even on the transit vehicle, and can determine actual arrival and departure times, travel delays, next stops and transfer opportunities. GPS is already in use by AC Transit and Muni, among others, although availability of real time information varies by district.

In southern California, GPS is integral to a "Smart Shuttle" system which was tested by Foothill Transit in partnership with Caltrans and the Southern California Association of Governments. Dispatchers used the GPS to determine where the bus was which a rider wished to board, then dispatched a shuttle to transport the rider from doorstep to bus stop in time to board the bus. For the return trip, riders told the driver where they would be leaving the bus and requested a shuttle, which arrived in time to pick up the rider at the bus stop.

GPS can also assist the individual driver. In addition to helping with in-car navigation and emergency systems, GPS is being used by Progressive Insurance to tailor car insurance costs to the actual use of the car. By determining where, when and how far drivers travel, insurance costs can be based on specific information, saving money for many drivers. Billing is done with the same privacy protection as phone or credit card use.

A recent Surface Transportation Policy Project Progress newsletter cites many more examples of new ITS technology and potential applications, including using GPS systems on buses to report travel speeds in certain transportation corridors, or to combine fixed route bus systems with flexible routing based on call-in requests by riders near the transit corridor. An article on freight movement describes the use of restricted lanes and priority signals for freight, and moving and delivering packages using transit and urban rail.

While some ITS concepts are still extremely futuristic, transportation agencies and transit districts around the world are implementing others, and many will become routine in years ahead. A word of caution is in order, however. In addition to the expense inherent in exploring any new technology, the heavy dependency on electronic information gathering and distribution raises privacy concerns, particularly where an individual's travel patterns can be recorded, such as with transponders or GPS. Other unanticipated consequences include the recent discovery by Muni that GPS equipment and other new technology added to new Muni trolley buses have made the vehicles much heavier than original specifications. Some of these "bright ideas" will need careful planning to retain their shine.

Leslie Stewart

More Bright Ideas

Driving on Air

It's not exactly like letting the air out of a balloon and watching it zoom forward, but the new e.Volution car does run on compressed air. The car uses tanks of compressed air, similar to those used for scuba diving, attached to the underside of the car. When the air is injected into the cylinder chamber of a special light-weight piston engine, it expands and provides power. Control of engine speed is through a conventional accelerator pedal controlling a valve within the motor. The original design is by Formula One engine designer Guy Nègre.

The tanks can be refilled by plugging the vehicle into an electric power source and compressing air into the tanks, a process which takes approximately four hours. By using special air-stations, a vehicle can be recharged in three minutes, an particularly attractive option for urban fleets or business enterprises. A fully fueled car can travel approximately 120 miles, comparable to the range of many electric vehicles. Factories in France and South Africa are beginning production of the vehicle, and factories are also planned in Mexico, Spain, Switzerland and Australia. *LS*

Still Going...

Electric cars in various shapes and sizes continue to have potential. In Sebastopol, seven tiny bright-colored cars are scooting around town as part of a pilot project by manufacturers to show how the cars can be used in a downtown setting. The project is partially funded by the California Energy Commission, which feels that the cars are ideal answers for stop-and-go driving that creates pollution.

The golf-cart-sized cars have a limited range and speed, but have many of the features of full-sized vehicles. Guests at the Holiday Inn will be able to use two cars as rentals, while employees of the electrical car manufacturer and retailer Zapworld use two more to shuttle employees and equipment among facilities. Three cars are assigned to the city of Sebastopol's public works department, which is using one to check water meters. *LS*

Our Kinder, Gentler Streets

Driving is dangerous, but many people feel that getting out of the car and trying the alternatives may be more dangerous yet. Although studies have shown that riding a bicycle to work is safer than driving to work, heavy traffic and well-publicized pedestrian and bicycle fatalities often discourage walking or biking. In Marin County, a joint effort by the Marin County Bicycle Coalition, transportation agencies and law enforcement is reminding travelers to "Share the Road" through roadside signs along major arterials, and bumper stickers on law enforcement vehicles. The message is intended for drivers and also for the bicyclists and pedestrians using the roadways, since careless actions in traffic by anyone can affect others.



In Redwood City, the roadside signs are humorously worded but seriously intended reminders to drivers not to speed along heavily traveled residential streets. Clever graphics and slogans such as, "Speeding tickets available ahead" are meant to catch the attention of drivers hurrying along familiar routes who may not be totally focused on their driving. Other cities have also turned to humor to increase safety awareness, including San Francisco, which used catchy posters, and Pleasanton, where residents received signs to attach to garbage cans reminding drivers to watch their speed. One of the Pleasanton signs shows Mark McGuire and reads, "I hit 70, but I drive 25".

LS

This Ride Brought to You By...

Advertising on bus shelters and transit station walls is not new, but it is a win-win situation. For example, new shelters for AC Transit riders have been installed by Lamer Transit Advertising, which will profit from the advertising it places on 400 of the 500 shelters. Both AC Transit and the cities in which shelters are located receive a percentage of the profits.

Bay Area BART and Muni Metro commuters may have something really different to check out soon. A new twist in subway advertising is being used by the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit System (MARTA), where Coca-Cola has installed illuminated boxes featuring "incremental images" as part of an ad campaign for Dasani bottled water. The effect for passengers travelling by the boxes will be similar to a flipbook advertisement for the Coke product. MARTA plans up to 20 ad sites along its routes, and expects \$15 million in revenues, which will be used to support the transit service and reduce potential fare increases. Marketing sources suggest San Francisco could be on the list of future locations. *LS*

More Bright Ideas

Getting Around

Residents of Redwood Shores in Redwood City are being targeted for shuttle service to Caltrain in an effort to encourage more use of public transportation. The pilot program, approved by the city in February, will provide taxi service between a rider's home and the Caltrain station at a time requested by the rider. The rider and the city will share the cost of the fare. The goal is to get at least two riders per cab during the busiest times of the day.

Taxis are also the answer for some disabled riders in San Francisco, where several taxi companies provide vehicles with ramps for wheelchairs. Riders are charged the usual fares, and cabs are available for other service as well, but drivers must carry at least three wheelchair passengers a day. Drivers must take special training in assisting disabled passengers, but also get priority entering the competitive San Francisco cab market. San Francisco residents have priority, because the city helps to subsidize the program through vehicle purchases, and as the program's popularity has risen, taxis are seldom available for passengers from other parts of the Bay Area. Despite problems with finding vehicles to convert that can handle the rigors of taxi service, Muni plans to continue purchasing vehicles to supplement other paratransit and transit services in the city.

Wheelchair passengers riding Samtrans buses can bring their attendants on board at discounted rates during off-peak hours. The district hopes that the reduced attendant fare will make riding the bus an attractive alternative to using the on-call Redi-Wheels service, which is over eight times as expensive to provide. All buses are wheelchair-accessible, and run more hours a day than Redi-Wheels, providing passengers more flexibility in planning their trips. *LS*

Update on Water Availability: No Mo' Lawn

The quintessential suburban lawn is being reconsidered—not only by owners tired of upkeep chores, but also by water districts and others concerned about the resources which go into large expanses of close-cropped grass. Particularly in arid climates, such as Glendale, Arizona, and Denver, water districts have encouraged homeowners to convert to less water-hungry landscaping with rebates, ordinances and other incentives. A federal study showed that Las Vegas could save 40 percent of its water use by eliminating lawns.

Alternatives to lawns include rock gardens, vegetable gardens, and native plants such as succulents, buffalo grass and live oak appropriate to various parts of the country. In addition to reducing the need for new irrigation systems and new sources of water, shrinking lawn acreage also reduces the water quality impacts from chemical herbicides and fertilizers, the air quality impacts of gasoline-powered mowers, and energy use for treating and pumping water used for lawn watering. *LS*



Good Neighbors

The architect's view looks lovely, but what will it look like from down the block? In some cities, neighbors can see a computer-generated, three-dimensional image that shows what a building looks like and how it will fit into the neighborhood. A recent Santa Rosa ordinance requires three-dimensional renderings on projects that will have a visual impact, such as those which are on the border between commercial and residential zones, or at city gateways. Developers have found that the renderings give residents and planners a better impression of proposed projects and often help in getting project approval.

The next step? Three-dimensional animations, which take viewers over and around the proposed project. Although the technology for the renderings and animation is far less expensive than it used to be, animation is still used primarily for expensive projects or those in very sensitive locations, such as a proposal for development at Moffett Field. Like renderings, however, both developers and planners credit animations with pinpointing potential problems in the early design stages when fixes are easier to make, preventing costly mistakes or unsightly results which will last for decades. *LS*

Odds & Ends

For **smog alerts** on the go, telecommunications firms in southern California have arranged to get air quality information from several Los Angeles-area counties, then provide the information to subscribers via cell phone or pager. Alerts include smog conditions, ultraviolet indexes and pollen counts, as well as basic weather information.

Trend-spotting: More and more cities are providing citizens with police radar guns to spot speeders in their neighborhoods. Information on speed and license numbers of vehicles is turned over to the police department, which issues warning letters. Police also use the information to evaluate neighborhood traffic enforcement needs.

Nice to Know

Milestones

The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. Since 1961 ABAG has provided the cities and counties of the Bay Area a way to solve land use, housing, transportation, environmental quality, and economic development problems through cooperative action. Services it provides to member jurisdictions include the Regional Data Center and Economic Clearinghouse, training for staff members, earthquake research, and a variety of pooled financial and insurance services. A current project is the Bay Area Dioxins Project, exploring solutions to the presence of dioxins in the region's ecosystems; a report is scheduled for presentation to the Executive Board in November. ABAG's next semi-annual General Assembly will be held on October 18, 2001, at the Oakland Marriott, and will focus on "Energy Policy and Local Government."

The newest ferry in the Golden Gate fleet has arrived. The MV Mendocino, a high-speed catamaran, was christened in Fort Bragg on July 20 and sailed into the bay on July 22. The vessel is scheduled for tests and training runs for the next two months, and will go into service early in September on the Larkspur/San Francisco run. Although similar to the MV Del Norte, the new ferry incorporates improvements recommended after the MV Del Norte began service, including a larger passenger capacity and additional protected bike storage. Perhaps the most obvious difference is that the MV Mendocino will use the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District's new logo depicting the Golden Gate Bridge.



Awards

Two Bay Area transportation agencies were honored in May for their engineering achievements. The American Society of Civil Engineers chose the Golden Gate Bridge as a Civil Engineering Monument of the Millennium. The ten Monuments of the Millennium, one in each of ten civil engineering categories, also include the Panama Canal, the Empire State Building, Kansai International Airport, and the California Water Project. Each monument was chosen as an example of the use of engineering ingenuity to overcome major design and construction challenges, but also for its ability to uplift the human spirit and create pride in the community it serves, its use of construction techniques to preserve the natural environment, and its contribution to regional and world economies.

The American Public Works Association (APWA) chose the Golden Gate Bridge and BART to receive awards as two of the ten best public works projects of the 20th century. Others include Hoover Dam, the St. Lawrence Seaway and the Tennessee Valley Authority. In honoring BART, APWA noted the technological leap represented by BART, the "revolutionary decision" by residents to tax themselves to build the system, and its role as a model for other American urban rail systems.

Rail-Volution

For the first time in its short but influential history, the annual Rail-Volution Conference will be held in San Francisco, from September 13-16, 2001. Started as a regional conference in the Pacific Northwest in 1995, Rail-Volution has rapidly developed into one of the definitive gathering points for transit and planning professionals, elected officials, business leaders and community activists devoted to "building livable communities with transit". Themes for Rail-Volution 2001 include financing, transportation development, land-use planning, and coalition-building. In addition to workshops, symposia, and speakers, attendees can sign up for "mobile workshops" which will showcase relevant Bay Area projects and neighborhoods. On the mobile workshop list: a walking tour of Mountain View after a Caltrain ride, a tour of PacBell Park/South Beach/Mission Bay, Downtown Oakland, Northside Community Garden near the North Berkeley BART station, and a bicycle ride along the Iron Horse Trail between BART's Pleasant Hill and Dublin/Pleasanton stations.

For more information on Bright Ideas and Nice to Know topics:

Surface Transportation Policy Project,
www.transact.org (May 2001 issue is online
or write to STTP, 1100 17th Street, NW, Tenth
Floor, Washington, DC 20036)

e.Volution, http://www.zeropollution.com
Zapworld electric cars, http://zapworld.com/
news/sebastopolNEVs.htm

Marin County Bicycle Coalition, http://
www.bikadelic.com/mcbc

San Francisco Paratransit, http://
www.sfparatransit.com, 415-923-6142

Rail-Volution, http://www.railvolution.com,
800-788-7077

Association of Bay Area Governments,
http://www.abag.ca.gov, 510-464-7900

Regional Transportation Plan, *continued from page 1*

Since the last RTP update, transportation planning in the Bay Area has undergone some changes. In December, MTC's longtime Executive Director, Larry Dahms, retired and was succeeded by Steve Heminger. Meanwhile, a federal review of MTC's status as a Metropolitan Planning Organization included substantial pressure by transportation advocacy organizations to make the agency more responsive to the public and more sensitive to environmental justice concerns, resulting in an order to MTC to institute changes. Finally, MTC is facing the latest in a series of environmental lawsuits designed to link MTC decisions more closely to planning for air pollution controls.

One result of these changes was a major public participation effort for the current update of the RTP. Phase I included several workshops throughout the region, a telephone poll and an online survey, reaching over 4,000 members of the public between late February and mid-May.

Virtually all groups participating in the outreach process agreed substantially on six main points:

1. **Existing transportation resources need to be better utilized**, through improved management and maintenance and more efficient operation of the transportation system. Suggestions included taking advantage of space in underused HOV lanes, and filling gaps in the current bike-lane system.
2. **Problems in moving people and freight are getting worse**, with traffic congestion increasing and transit unable to pick up the load. Participants wanted new and innovative approaches, including new funding, pilot projects and trial programs, and leadership from MTC and other transportation agencies to push through new solutions.
3. **Transit will be used more if some obstacles are removed**. Key obstacles include inadequate local transit links to rail stations, too many different tickets and passes, and personal safety concerns.
4. **Transit is essential for some riders, especially low-income riders, but it is very inconvenient and time-consuming**. Participants cited trips which take 5-10 times as long as driving, buses which don't run in the evening and on weekends, and lack of service to key destinations.
5. **Land use and transportation cannot be separated**. Participants in workshops and on the Web emphasized this. Housing is a key to solving the region's transportation problems, and land-use and transportation must be planned together. In addition to transit-oriented development, suggestions were also made to develop stronger partnerships between agencies responsible for land-use planning and transportation.
6. **The transportation decision-making process is very confusing and often frustrating to those who want change**. There are too many agencies involved for the public to understand clearly who to address and how changes can be made. Many respondents suggested consolidation of plans, planning agencies, or transit service providers. Comments supported decision-making at the lowest possible level within an organization. Other comments requested more regional leadership from MTC.

The public outreach responses added a new goal, Safety, to the five RTP Goals and Objectives already proposed: Mobility, Equity, Economy, Community Vitality, and Environment. In another innovation for this RTP, performance measures are proposed for each group of objectives. For example, the Community Vitality objective, "Support plans and programs which make it more convenient and safer to walk and bike", will measure progress through development of a Regional Bike Plan, and implementation of recommendations from the Pedestrian Safety Task Force.

With limited resources, each commitment in the RTP reflects trade-offs and strategies to stretch funding through leveraging, partnerships, and innovations. Each goal is accompanied by suggestions of "Possible Areas for MTC Investigation/Experimentation" and "Supporting Actions Needed from Others". The areas for investigation include ideas such as congestion pricing to shift traffic to off-peak hours, a transit affordability study, remote check-in for airport travelers travelling by transit, and a parking incentive program to reduce the availability of free parking and offer alternatives to driving. There are many supporting actions needed from other agencies, from bills needed in Congress and the state legislature to actions by employers, business and environmental organizations, and law enforcement.

Some overall policy directions have been clearly established by the Commission for this RTP update. Continuing the shift which became evident with the final changes in the last RTP, transportation planning for the region is now focused on transit improvement and expansions. Money designated for roads is primarily for maintenance and for reducing congestion through improvements at key intersections, additional carpool/bus lanes and tow truck services. A central component of the RTP is the new regional transit expansion plan, which adds express buses to the rail services included in the previous rail expansion plan adopted by MTC in 1988.

In addition to regular RTP updates at Commission and subcommittee meetings, Commission mem-

bers and staff have met in several workshops focused on the key policy decisions which will shape the plan. A December workshop reviewed all the components of the plan. In June, Commissioners discussed the RTP goals, objectives and strategies, additional projects submitted by CMAs, and new rail and bus projects. Other topics at the June session included whether to again fully fund the shortfall between transit subsidies and operating costs, how much to expand the Transportation for Livable Communities (TLC) program and the new Housing Incentive Plan, and how to implement the new Lifeline transit program which has emerged from the Welfare-to-Work planning done in the past four years.

Comments at these workshops and at the public outreach meetings indicate some of the areas in which the draft plan may invite debate. For example, since the last RTP, equity issues have become increasingly important to the Commission and there is strong support from Commissioners for the Welfare-to-Work program and the new Lifeline Transit component. An Environmental Justice Advisory Group has also contributed to the draft RTP. However, some transit advocates and other community groups feel that this is only a start at redressing a long-standing imbalance. They see increased transit funding as an equity issue and will argue strongly against any proposal which seems to favor highways over transit. They also argue that funding formulas should consider the population served by a transit agency, giving greater weight to inner-city systems over suburban areas.

The Commission supports fully funding the transit shortfall again. This decision tilts the transit/roads funding balance further toward transit, which would seem to favor the transit proponents. However, it reduces the flexibility of CMAs to put money into local street maintenance such as pothole repair—and poor roads also affect transit. Commissioners also want to be sure that transit agencies are keeping the shortfall as small as possible through good management. One option is to direct funding to those transit services which fill regional needs, but such a methodology will take time to develop.

The relationship between the CMAs and the regional plan now includes the local agencies' role in selecting TLC projects, particularly since some CMAs were reluctant to support the proposed tripling of TLC funding at the expense of other projects which were primarily focused on streets and roads. Also, new projects contained in some CMA plans far outstrip the money available for such projects unless new sources are found. Most Commissioners are local elected officials, and some sit on county CMAs, making the process of reconciling local and regional needs difficult.

It has been said that the sure sign of a good compromise is that no one is totally satisfied, and this may prove to be true of the final RTP. However, before that point is reached, the draft plan must be discussed and reshaped as necessary to reflect the region, so that no one will be totally dissatisfied with the results, either. Between September and November of this year Phase II of MTC's public outreach process will again engage Bay Area residents, to be sure that the final RTP is not just the Commission's plan, but a true Regional Transportation Plan.

Leslie Stewart



For more information:
Metropolitan Transportation Commission,
<http://www.mtc.ca.gov>, 510-464-7700
Bay Area Transportation and Land Use Coalition/Transportation Choices Forum, <http://www.transcoalition.org>, 510-740-3100

Biodiesel, *continued from page 3*

contains no soluble toxics, unlike petroleum diesel. Waterfowl, mammals, and fish, however, can suffer from being coated with biodiesel. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency considers it to be an oil, like petroleum diesel, and harmful to marine wildlife.

On dry land, San Francisco International Airport is experimenting with four biodiesel vehicles, two using 100% biodiesel and two using the B20 mixture. Berkeley's Ecology Center is using 100% biodiesel for its 10-truck fleet of recycling trucks. In May, a San Francisco gas station opened a biodiesel pump for retail customers.

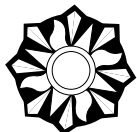
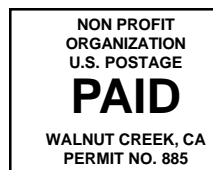
In the last few years, the biodiesel industry has grown dramatically, largely on its own, without government subsidies such as those received by the ethanol industry. As it is, the cost of biodiesel is about 50 percent above that of petroleum diesel. Mass production could lower the cost, as could the development of oilseeds with a higher content of oil. Soybeans contain 20 percent oil; rapeseed (canola), which is used in Europe, contains 40 percent.

In spite of its higher cost, biodiesel has a loyal market. Its users are drawn by its environmental benefits and its aesthetic qualities, its cleanness and its pleasant aroma—"like doughnuts or french fries."

Adelia Sabiston

League of Women Voters of the Bay Area
Bay Area Monitor

500 St. Mary's Rd. Suite 14
Lafayette, CA 94549-5431
<http://www.bayareamonitor.org>



Biodiesel, page 3

Other Bright Ideas, page 6

INDEX OF PREVIOUS ISSUES (*Read these online at <http://www.bayareamonitor.org>*)

JUNE/JULY 2001

- ✦ AIR QUALITY IMPACTS OF THE ENERGY CRUNCH
- ✦ BLACKOUTS AND AIR QUALITY
- ✦ POWER PLAYS: Regional Agencies and the Energy Crunch
- ✦ BART: Old Needs, New Directions
- ✦ AirBART: Oakland Airport Connection
- ✦ UPDATE: WATER TRADING
- ✦ TRANSPORTATION CONTROL MEASURES
- ✦ SURVEY REPORT

APRIL/MAY 2001

- ✦ PORT IMPROVEMENTS CLEAN THE AIR
- ✦ TRANSIT RIDERS GET A *LIFT*
- ✦ THIRST FOR GROWTH: Stretching the Water Supply
- ✦ SHAKY LANDINGS: Airports in Earthquakes
- ✦ UPDATES: Transportation, Ballast Water, Transbay Terminal
- ✦ INSERT: Reader Survey

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2001

- ✦ LETTERS OF TRANSIT: A & B Spell Change for South Bay
- ✦ ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN TRANSPORTATION
- ✦ MORE ENERGY, MORE POLLUTION?

- ✦ CLEAN HEAT
- ✦ YIELD-TO-BUS PILOT PROGRAM
- ✦ MEASURES A & B

DECEMBER 2000/JANUARY 2001

- ✦ GREAT EXPECTATIONS: New Transbay Terminal
- ✦ ECONOMIC VALUE OF PARKS
- ✦ BUILDING ON SUCCESS: The Next Clean Air Plan Update
- ✦ SPARE THE AIR YEAR-ROUND
- ✦ UPDATES OF RECENT ARTICLES: Smart Growth, Electronic Toll Collection
- ✦ WATER BLENDING: A Clarification

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2000

- ✦ WATER BLENDING
- ✦ PLUGGING INTO THE FUTURE: Electric Vehicles
- ✦ NEW BAY CROSSING STUDY
- ✦ WHERE THE ACTION IS: Development Near Transit

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2001

- ✦ REGIONAL GROWTH PLANNING
- ✦ BAY AREA FLIGHT PLAN: The New Regional Airport Systems Plan
- ✦ BRIGHT IDEAS: Green San Francisco, Joint Aquatic Permitting Process,

- Community Gardens, Taxi Tickets Online, Clean Car Pledge, Senior Taxis, On the Road, Front Doors Updates: Carsharing, Location-Efficient Mortgage
- ✦ ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS: A New Approach to Regulatory Compliance

JULY 2000

- ✦ THE STATE OF THE REGION: A League Symposium Report
- ✦ NEW MONEY FOR PARKS
- ✦ BRIEF HISTORY OF THE BAY AREA MONITOR
- ✦ MONITOR'S BAY AREA HISTORY QUIZ

SPRING 2000 SPECIAL ISSUE

- ✦ FOCUS ON FERRIES: New Regional Water Transit Authority

MAY/JUNE 2000

- ✦ RAPID BUS TRANSIT
- ✦ GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE GOES ELECTRONIC
- ✦ SUMMER FOCUS ON SMOG AND OZONE
- ✦ A GROWING PROBLEM: Invasive Plants
- ✦ SPARE THE AIR