

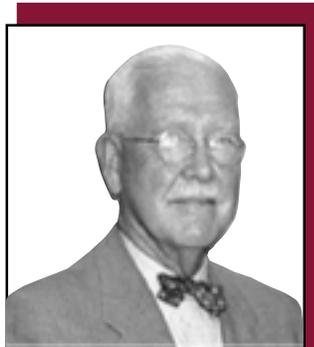
ABAG: *A Concise History*

Two great bridges. Thousands of service men and women and shipyard workers. A handful of major corporations. All played a part in creating the conditions for an association of the Bay Area's local governments to flourish—or at least take its first steps.

Ferries across the Bay were plentiful in the 1920s and 1930s. But it was the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge and the Golden Gate Bridge, built in the depths of the Great Depression, that both captured the imagination and served as symbols of a newer community than people had been familiar with in their own localities—a Bay Area community.

A few years later, after the horrors and triumphs of World War II, the area found itself growing at a record pace. Shipyard workers, many from the south, liked what they saw and stayed. GIs and other service people who had shipped out from Oakland to fight in the grim struggle against Japan also liked what they saw. Of those lucky enough to return alive and healthy, many got married, moved here and started families.

Toward the end of the war, industry leaders, worried about the region's ability to adapt easily from a defense-related to a peacetime economy, formed the Bay Area Council in 1945. They began to be concerned that increased smog from burgeoning traffic might discourage businesses from locating here. Linkages gradually became apparent, and the council started to become interested in transportation and then land-use planning. In 1955 what is today called the Bay Area Air Quality Management District was formed (following the Regional Water Quality Control Board in 1949), and in 1957 (after eight years' study by the Legislature) the Bay Area Rapid Transit District.



But in that year, the Bay Area Council made a move that had unintended consequences. It resurrected a 1946 proposal for a regional agency to acquire, manage and oper-

Claude Hutchison, ABAG's first president and former Berkeley mayor

By Revan Tranter

**Visiting Scholar,
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ate the Bay Area's major airports, seaports and bridges. In Sacramento, a Senate Interim Committee on Bay Area Problems had been formed, and after a visit to study what is now called the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, endorsed the Bay Area Council's proposal the following year. The council launched a substantial public relations campaign to gain support for what was to be called the Golden Gate Authority, and sponsored a bill in the Legislature, though it was not successful.

What all this did, of course, was to alarm Bay Area local governments. Berkeley City Manager John Phillips did extensive research on the subject in 1958, and his Mayor Claude B. Hutchison, was urged by the Alameda County Mayors' Conference to convene a meeting of Bay Area Mayors. Mayor Jean Fassler of Pacifica in San Mateo County assisted by calling a follow-up meeting and before long there was a bandwagon of city opposition to any metropolitan authority not controlled by local government.

In 1960, with advice from Berkeley Councilmember (and U.C.B. planning professor) Jack Kent and assistance from Phillips and San Leandro City Manager Wes McClure, as well as the League of California Cities (LCC), an alternative proposal was drafted...for a voluntary metropolitan council of cities (to which counties were shortly added). By the summer of that year proposed bylaws had been drafted by Richard Carpenter, the League's Executive Director and General Counsel, and Bill MacDougall, General Manager of what is now called the California State Association of Counties (CSAC). The proposed body was now ready to accept its first members.

The term "metropolitan council"—borrowed from discussions in other areas of the country—had been used provisionally, but the counties disliked it, feeling it too "big-citified." While shaving one morning, Mayor Hutchison hit on an alternative—which is why the new organization became the Association of Bay Area Governments.

The Early Years

To get it going, a majority of both cities and counties was required, who would all execute the joint powers agreement drawn up under the provisions of Title 1, Division 7, Chapter 5 of the Government Code of California. By January 12, 1961, city and county majorities had been attained, and the first meeting of ABAG's General Assembly was held the following month, electing Mayor Hutchison to be the first President. Although a few years behind similar efforts in Detroit (1954), Salem, Oregon and Washington, D.C. (both 1957), ABAG became the first council of local governments in California. While each city and county was to have one vote in the twice-a-year General Assembly, the



Wes McClure, one of ABAG's earliest supporters and former San Leandro City Manager

counties had insisted that it be bi-cameral, with a majority of counties secure against being outvoted, even by all the cities combined. Of course the reverse applied too, but would have less dramatic impact than if, say, three counties out of five present could outvote 60 or 70 cities. The Executive Board—or Committee as it was then called—was to meet at least four times a year (in practice it was much more frequent, in fact monthly for many years),

and its seats were allocated on a roughly population basis. The annual dues were to be divided equally between counties and cities.

The new association's headquarters were in the Claremont Hotel, legally in Oakland but postally in Berkeley. The main reason, apart from a fairly central Bay Area location, was that the hotel already housed the Institute for Local Self-Government (a joint LCC-CSAC venture) and the League's office. By May 1, Wilber E. Smith, former City Manager of San Rafael, had left his position as Assistant Director of the National League of Cities to become ABAG's first Executive Director.

In its first decade—once it had discarded the somewhat naïve idea of relying on contributed assistance for its planning work—ABAG did quite an impressive job of producing an open space plan, an ocean coastline plan, and an Airport systems plan. But three things occurred that attracted public attention and affected ABAG adversely for years to come.

First was the creation, on an interim basis in 1965, but made permanent four years later, of the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC). Local governments had argued that responsibility for protecting the Bay should reside with those communities adjacent to it, and ABAG felt that it could execute that role in a responsible manner. But the prevailing opinion in the Legislature was that it was local government that had allowed the shocking deterioration of this once pristine resource to happen. So here was yet another single-purpose district, and ABAG's pride was soothed only to the extent that it would be allowed to appoint all four of the city representatives on the Commission (counties appointed one each, with a majority of members from gubernatorial, legislative and federal sources).

The second incident was the discovery, in 1968, that Tom Truax, the young Assistant to Executive Director Warren Schmid (Smith had left four years earlier to become Assistant to the President of the National Automotive Safety Foundation in Washington, D.C.) had systematically, with great determination and remarkable skill, embezzled approximately half-a-million dollars: perhaps \$ 2 1/2 million in today's money. Although ABAG was far from a wealthy organization, large sums did pass through its hands, since it was acting as a legal conduit for BART to obtain federal planning funds.

The story, much too long to tell here, is dramatic and tragic, with a four-year prison term for Truax, the ruin of a capable Executive Director's career, and an end to both ABAG's vain hope of taking responsibility for the Bay, and its quite reasonable expectation of receiving the new federal designation as the Bay Area's regional transportation planning agency.

Indeed the third event—following, as we have seen, BCDC's grant of permanent status—was the Legislature's 1970 creation (to take effect in 1972) of yet another single-purpose agency, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (and its subsequent designation by the U.S. Department of Transportation to receive substantial annual funds).

After the Truax incident, ABAG had to concentrate on staying alive, and retaining its membership. A great deal of dedicated work by several of its leaders - including Thomas Mellon (San Francisco's Chief Administrative Officer), Supervisor Joseph Bort of

Alameda County (who was an attorney), and newly-hired Legal Counsel (and former Berkeley councilmember Arthur Harris)—eventually resulted in recovery of almost all the money.

The next few years saw a somewhat chastened organization. Schmid had been succeeded by Novato's City Manager, J. Julien (known as John) Baget, whose somewhat "green eyeshade" personality seemed to fit the new circumstances. On the positive side, financial integrity was re-established, and the excellent professional planning work of the sixties was confirmed in 1970, with approval and publication of the Regional Plan: 1970-1990, with its emphasis on city-centered growth. Less worthy of praise was a timid approach to controversial proposals, such as that for another bridge (the "southern crossing"), over the Bay and transportation links in San Francisco.



Joseph P. Bort, ABAG past president, former Alameda County Supervisor, and major regionalist

Senator John Foran of San Francisco, author of the MTC legislation, would have preferred to see a truly comprehensive agency. He made sure his bill included a proviso for MTC's automatic absorption in any such future agency. It was perhaps in that spirit, led by Supervisor Bort, its first chair, that MTC decided to rely on ABAG for the general land-use planning which the federal authorities required as the basis for regional transportation planning.

ABAG's leaders, especially Supervisor Bort and Mayor Don Dillon of Fremont, who became President in 1972, believed the time was now approaching for a return to a more expansive outlook and a willingness to undertake greater responsibilities. A national search was conducted to find a successor to Baget, who left for southern California in the spring of 1973.

To his successor, there seemed three possibilities:

- to achieve, and become part of, the more comprehensive type of regional planning established in

most of the country's metropolitan areas;

- to give more protection to the Regional Plan by increased attention to the reviews of local proposals for federal funds; and
- to seek responsibility for managing the Bay Area's role under section 208 of the new federal Water Pollution Control Act.

Comprehensive Planning and Regional Governance

The notion of a more inclusive form of regional governance, or at least regional planning, had been around for many years—championed by groups ranging from the Commonwealth Club and the Bay Area Council to the League of Women Voters and the Sierra Club, and latterly by two members of the State Assembly: Republican William Bagley of Marin County, and Democrat John Knox of Richmond. Others have written extensively about this, but space limitations make that impossible here.

Jack Knox is the legislator most closely associated with attempts to achieve a strong and capable regional planning agency, but although his various bills always succeeded in the Assembly, they never did in the Senate. Two principal reasons were the fear of conservatives from southern California that this idea might spread to their part of the state and somehow result in domination by Los Angeles of their suburban territory; and the unwillingness of Bay Area groups to compromise on the composition of a governing board (local government appointees, directly elected representatives, or a mixture of both).

Knox himself was a compromiser, as were ABAG and the Bay Area Council. But the Sierra Club and the statewide Planning and Conservation League would not budge from their complete distrust of local government appointees, and that made just enough of a difference to one or two Senators. At one point, success lay only two votes short, and could have been achieved, but for Knox's bad luck in having, for a floor manager in the other house, to rely on Senator Milton Marks of San Francisco, not the most adept (or determined) at that role, and famous for reflecting the opinion of the last person he'd talked to.

By 1976 it was all over, and the subject did not return until creation of the Bay Vision 2020 Commission in 1989—chaired by former U.C. Berkeley Chancellor Michael Heyman—whose report and subsequent legislation two years later also failed to achieve enough

support in the State Senate. There are those who strongly believe that, had the Bay Area gained a truly comprehensive regional planning capability a generation ago, and had such an agency been gradually strengthened by the Legislature, as MTC has been, we would today have fewer “urban sprawl” problems, and a notably better means to cope with our future.

Protecting the Regional Plan

Under the previous year’s Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act, ABAG had in 1967 received a key designation to review local and regional applications for a vast array of federal grants and loans (airports, health facilities, highways, housing, libraries, open space, waste treatment, etc.). Although not a right to veto, these A-95 reviews (named after the OMB circular establishing the procedures) were intended to be influential in giving federal funding agencies a better idea of regional priorities, and making neighboring jurisdictions aware of potential impacts from local proposals.

That they were taken seriously not just by the funding agencies, but by the applicants, was shown by ABAG’s decision to charge non-members a fee, based on a percentage of the grant applied for, not to exceed 110% of what their ABAG dues would have been. In the wake of the Truax troubles, this proved to be a valuable tool in maintaining membership.

The professional quality of the reviews, even in ABAG’s lean years of the late sixties and early seventies, was high. Occasionally reporters or researchers would compare applications submitted with those recommended, and conclude that voluntary councils of governments like ABAG lacked the will to differ from or argue with any of their members. What such people were unaware of was the many conversations at staff level, in which a project might be modified substantially before being officially submitted.

In 1974, concerned about the potential adverse effects on the Regional Plan from major projects such as a large shopping center or housing development, ABAG established an early-warning, review panel system to consider potential threats to the Regional Plan. Such matters could be raised before the Regional Planning Committee (RPC), whose chair would appoint a three-person hearing panel to advise whether a full-scale review should be undertaken. Any RPC review would result in a final decision by the Executive Board.

In 1975, on a matter raised by the city of Livermore, the Board faced its most contentious issue—a major developer’s proposal for a “new town” in Alameda County, adjacent to Livermore, to be called Las Positas. After a tense debate, the Board, by a 23-2 vote, agreed with the RPC that the proposal was premature, and as designed would have major adverse effects on local schools, air quality, and ground water.

This may well be the most emotional meeting ABAG’s Executive Board has ever had. Differing sharply from his Alameda County colleague Joe Bort, Supervisor Fred Cooper - good friend of ABAG, chair of its Finance Committee and supporter of strong regional governance, as well as housing for low- and moderate-income families—stormed out of the meeting after being on the losing end, saying he would do his best to make sure the county withdrew from ABAG. Some fancy footwork was necessitated the next day, and Alameda County did not withdraw.



ABAG’s Executive Board debates the proposed development of the Las Positas development in 1975.

What probably made as much difference as any in the Planning Committee’s and Executive Board’s decision was the quality of the professional staff work. It was superb, earned the support of other key regional agencies such as MTC and the Air District (and indeed Alameda County itself, which turned down the project), and gained for ABAG’s major projects review system a good deal of praise and several awards.

It was unfortunate that within a few years this capacity lay dormant, victim of both Proposition 13 and massive cutbacks in federal dollars. True, the A-95 system continued, but after 1980 it was relegated by the federal government to a less significant role, and diminished still further by a severe reduction in the number of grant programs.

Section 208 and the Environmental Management Plan

The Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972 included an innovative approach to the problem of non-point source pollution, such as that from urban runoff or agricultural wastes (as opposed to that from a point source, such as a pipe). Congressional intent indicated a preference for regional planning agencies to take responsibility for finding solutions. The Environmental Protection Agency was to cooperate with state water quality agencies, who would designate appropriate regional agencies.

Groundbreaking: EPA and State approved ABAG complex work program combining air and water quality, water supply, and solid waste...creating an Environmental Management Plan for the Bay Area.

ABAG made a very strong push for designation, ousting in the process the Bay Area Sewage Services Agency (whose track record was shown to be so pitiful that its original sponsor, Assemblyman Jack Knox, did what few legislators would normally do, agreed it had been a mistake, and got it eliminated). In 1975, the State Water Resources Control Board designated ABAG to take on the 208 responsibilities, and soon afterwards EPA awarded the Association a massive \$4.3 million grant to carry out the work needed. A far-sighted EPA Region IX Administrator, Paul DeFalco allowed and encouraged ABAG to merge the project with the work it was already obliged to undertake under the Clean Air Act. EPA and the State ultimately approved a complex work program combining air and water quality, water supply, and solid waste - in other words, to create an Environmental Management Plan for the Bay Area.

The work necessitated not just a larger technical staff, but to guide it in a manner likely to achieve the broadest public and political support, an 46-person Environmental Management Task Force, organized into several subcommittees and assisted by several advisory groups. Many interests were represented, including those of environmentalists, developers, agriculture, local government, minorities, and so on. Led by indefatigable Supervisor (and now U.S. Senator) Dianne Feinstein of San Francisco—who was also caring for her terminally ill husband—the whole group worked very hard to derive from many conflicting opinions a result that would have broad community support.

The Bay Area—like so many of the country's large urban regions—was a very long way from attaining the air quality standards mandated by federal and state

law. It became clear early on that the most difficult part of the plan in which to reconcile competing interests would be the Air Quality element. But few had imagined the vehemence with which some groups and individuals would confront the topic.

When the first draft emerged in 1977, the news media, who had ignored all encouragement and paid little attention to the work of the Task Force, focused only on controversial words. For example, the mere mention,

among many scores of (often only theoretically) possible actions, of emission control devices on power lawnmowers, brought a massive headline: "ABAG Threatens

Lawnmower Ban." Nightly TV news followed suit, and the public got the impression that, out of nowhere had suddenly emerged a vast lifestyle-threatening conspiracy. As the San Jose Mercury News commented, "In California, lifestyles are *sacred*."

No doubt this atmosphere is what encouraged the building industry to attack with such fury the compact-growth recommendations, such as increasing density around BART stations, expanding infill development, reducing development of steep slopes, and so on - including temporary moratoria where necessary. The areawide campaign was extremely well organized by a new group, based in Contra Costa County - COLAB (Coalition of Labor and Business). The sight of as many as 150 hardhats glowering at them, as well as allegations of a future that would bring here the density of Tokyo, proved unnerving to many local elected officials, and a strong likelihood developed that the EMP would fail to be adopted.

Knowing he had close ties to industry and labor, ABAG's Executive Director asked Jack Maltester, former Mayor of San Leandro and the Association's President in 1969, to meet as soon as possible with him and the current President (Councilmember Len Grote of Pleasant Hill) and Vice President (Santa Clara County Supervisor Rod Diridon). To a neutral hotel room at the Claremont, Maltester brought COLAB's attorney, and a compromise was forged whereby, in return for ABAG's dropping the land-use provisions from the EMP, COLAB would switch from vehement opposition to strong support, and request Senator John Nejedly of Contra Costa County to change his anti-ABAG bill to one in which the state was prohibited from interfering with ABAG's adopted EMP.

The result was adoption of the EMP by the General Assembly, and passage of Nejedly's bill, after which ABAG fought literally day and night against the strongest urging by Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr.'s top advisers that he not sign it. To the surprise of many he did, in an airport lounge on the evening of the last possible day. The Bay Area's Environmental Management Plan would always have to meet federal requirements and standards, but if it did so the state could not unilaterally make changes, and if it didn't, ABAG and its members would have the first opportunity to modify it.

Although the necessary compromises meant that the EMP was a long way from achieving perfection, it received national awards, and was described by EPA's Regional Administrator as "the most sophisticated plan in the country." The national government had taken a thoughtful approach to reducing pollution on a regional basis. Where it subsequently fell down was in not following up with adequate implementation funding for the many agencies who would be involved in carrying out the plan. Across the board, the times of generous funding were beginning to come to an end.

Hard Times

The late seventies and early eighties were a time of financial stringency for California's local governments and for ABAG in particular. Proposition 13 was approved by the voters in 1978, with almost immediate harsh effects. The other large councils of governments in California were less affected, because they received relatively generous federal funds for transportation planning. MTC's support of ABAG's regional planning work through federal DOT and state gas-tax funds was appreciated and needed, but they were much less than if ABAG itself had been directly funded.

When Prop. 13 passed, ABAG had to act quickly. For many jurisdictions, even in reduced circumstances, the annual dues to ABAG were small enough not to be a serious item in budget revisions. But for the larger counties and cities, they might equal the salary of one or more nurses or police officers. San Francisco, as both city and county, paid the highest dues, and an off-the-cuff decision was made that they would probably be willing to pay 40 percent, and pretty certainly thirty. To be safe, and to set an example, a 70 percent dues reduction was agreed to by the Finance Committee and Executive Board, following a staff recommendation. One third of ABAG's staff was laid off, and those remaining took a voluntary cut in pay.

Given not only Prop. 13 and the completion of the EMP grant, but also the winding down of ABAG's large annual 701 planning grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the next few years were difficult. But the agency's work seemed for the most part to be appreciated or at least respected. Except for an occasional very temporary withdrawal, no jurisdiction dropped out. Sometimes, though, meeting even the reduced payroll was a scary affair, and on occasion MTC made all the difference, by advancing the funds for work ABAG performed under the two agencies' contract.

Perhaps the oddest thing, for anyone today looking back at decisions made then, is that, at a dreadful time in the agency's finances, ABAG took the risk of moving from rented offices in the Claremont Hotel and, jointly with BART and MTC, building its own headquarters opposite the Lake Merritt station. The decision was made at the strong urging of Supervisor Joe Bort, after whom the MetroCenter building was later named. True, the deal had certain advantages, because BART wanted extra space, was going to build on an adjacent parking lot anyway, and made the land available without cost. But ABAG compounded its risk (though not without a great deal of thought) by taking twice as much space as it needed, and renting half to BART, in three staged amounts. Years later, BART's General Manager confided to ABAG's Executive Director that he and his colleagues had been astonished when ABAG gave notice, in the appropriate three stages, that it wanted the space back. "To be honest," he said, "we thought you were going to go under."



The groundbreaking for the MetroCenter in March 1982. Officials (at that time) from left to right: Ralph Bolin, ABAG President and Mayor of Napa; Eugene Garfinkel, BART Board Chair; Keith Bernard, BART General Manager; Bill Hein, MTC Deputy Executive Director; Revan Tranter, ABAG Executive Director; and Bill Lucius, MTC Commissioner.

A New Emphasis

What probably helped restore a measure of financial security, and even persuade most of the few remaining non-members to join, was the decision to make up for the reduction in planning capacity by becoming more of a service agency.

Since as far back as the early seventies, ABAG's distinguished work in seismic safety research and planning has had a service orientation; and one could look at the Association's pioneering work in emergency medical services, beginning the system of emergency response now firmly rooted in each county, as a form of service.

But what really caught on, no doubt because of the direct linkage to dollar savings, were two programs - financial services; and insurance and risk management.

- In 1983, ABAG launched its first financial services program: credit pooling. The idea was borrowed from a group of Sonoma County cities who had banded together to borrow money collectively, saving a tidy sum on issuance costs. Surely ABAG could provide a more convenient vehicle, because no separate joint powers body was needed (ABAG already was one), and with roughly a hundred jurisdictions (let alone many more if the program could be marketed outside the Bay Area) there would always be at least a few cities or counties contemplating capital funding. The initial \$4 million issuance enabled four cities to purchase items ranging from vehicles to buildings to communications systems.

Today borrowers include not only cities and counties, but special districts, hospitals, universities, schools, nonprofit housing and health care organizations, housing partnerships, and private businesses. More than \$1 billion dollars has been provided in tax-exempt financing. Visit the University of California's handsome systemwide headquarters in downtown Oakland and you are looking at a building financed by ABAG. Seven different programs are offered on a statewide basis, and the savings to members have been immense.

- In 1986, ABAG's Pooled Liability Assurance Network (PLAN) got off the ground. It was formed because the insurance industry, notorious for premium peaks and valleys, was dropping local government clients left and right. To ABAG, despite lacking knowl-

edge of the field, it seemed a worthwhile challenge to get up to speed and try to form a kind of member-owned cooperative. After a good deal of research and discussion with legal, financial and insurance experts, as well as with member governments, ABAG PLAN began operation. Today, it provides comprehensive, general and auto liability coverage for bodily injury, property damage, personal injury, and public officials' errors & omissions. It manages both risk and claims, and specialises in training. Since its inception, ABAG PLAN has returned over \$20 million to its members in annual rebates, while increasing both coverage and the pool's financial stability.

A New Emphasis: ABAG intensifies services offered, adding financial services and insurance and risk management.

- In 1987 came the Workers' Compensation Program—again, something offered without much prior knowledge, but with the firm intention to save ABAG members money. Today, there are a Workers' Comp. Administration Program for employers who self-insure, and a Workers' Comp. Pool for those too small to do so. Training and claims management are prominent features of the programs.

- Since 1994, when it began abagOnline, ABAG has provided public agencies with Web hosting, access to and assistance with the Internet, and training.

- Since the seventies ABAG has offered training to employees of member governments. With the promotion of Eugene Y. Leong to be the Association's Executive Director in 1995, the Training Center has successfully concentrated on environmental programs such as hazardous materials and waste treatment—and today does so for the general public, using, among other tools, online registration and instruction. OSHA certification can be achieved, as well as continuing education credits.

- In 1995, the foundation for ABAG POWER was laid, leading to a natural gas purchasing pool the following year, and an electricity purchasing pool in 1997. As with earlier service programs, the preliminary work required was immense, because in so many innovative areas there are no real experts and too many self-proclaimed ones. Moreover, power supply, even before California's post-deregulation crisis, is an area characterized by frequent changes in federal and state laws and regulations. But already savings have been achieved, and may well increase in the future.

Regional Planning Today

Mention of various successful service programs that have kept ABAG buoyant as a voluntary member organization should not imply that its planning programs have been abandoned. True, the planning staff, in the absence of the generous federal funding of the seventies, is much smaller. However, certain programs are synonymous with ABAG, e.g., the demographic research studies which underpin the well-known bi-annual *Projections* series and are relied on by many public and private groups—including MTC for its own planning work; state-mandated fair share housing needs distribution; and earthquake preparedness maps and studies. Key work also encompasses hazardous waste allocation and the Bay Area Delta Estuary.

But pride of place in bringing this short history to its conclusion now goes to two other planning approaches:

- In 1987, former state Senator (and now Attorney General) Bill Lockyer of Alameda County, conceived the idea of a hiking and biking trail that would one day circle the perimeter of San Francisco and San Pablo Bays - for maybe 400 miles: a “Ring around the Bay.” He was inclined to ask MTC to take on the responsibility for planning it and managing its construction, but (with MTC’s agreement) ABAG asked to take on that role, and Lockyer acquiesced. His legislation passed, and in the years since, and with the assistance of a devoted band of volunteers organized through a non-profit corporation, ABAG has supervised the completion, so far, of about half the Bay trail.

There is now strong support for the trail, both in the Legislature and the Governor’s office, evidenced by the allocation in 1999 of \$2.5 million and last year of triple that amount. ABAG should be immensely proud to play the lead role in establishing what will be a permanent jewel in the Bay Area’s crown.

- 1987 was also the year in which Gary Binger came from the Community Development Director’s position in Walnut Creek to become Regional Planning Director at ABAG. He has recently left to direct the Urban Land Institute’s California Smart Growth Initiative, but should be remembered for the leadership role he played in the following three initiatives.

- **Sub-Regional Planning:** Given on the one hand a political climate that does not favor top-down regional planning, and on the other a widely-held perception that parochial planning is not wanted either, it has been pos-

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sible, with the patient cooperation of many local elected officials and staff, as well as private groups, to piece together agreements for more sensitive development of various sub-regions within the Bay Area. Examples are the Tri-Valley cities and the county of Alameda, the cities and county of Sonoma, Oakland and San Leandro, the San Mateo County coastside communities, Napa County and its southern cities, and the cities and county of Solano.

- **Inter-Regional Partnership:** The gradual convergence of the Bay Area and the Central Valley, witnessed by all too many early-morning, long-distance commuters, has brought about the Inter-Regional Partnership, of three councils of governments, five counties, and ten cities. The goal is to achieve a more equitable jobs/housing balance, improve transportation and air quality, establish more sustainable methods of moving people between their homes and distant jobs, and pursue inter-regional economic development opportunities.

- **Smart Growth:** ABAG has joined with the Air District, BCDC, MTC, the Regional Water Quality Control Board and the Alliance for Sustainable Development, in an intensive, two-year outreach and participation process. The intent—through maps indicating which areas could be available for different kinds of development, and which environmentally important areas could be preserved or enhanced—is to try for a regional consensus on a preferred so-called “Regional Livability Footprint” for the next 20 years. ABAG’s Executive Board would consider adopting a formal alternative forecast for MTC’s Regional Transportation Plan and other regional plans. Implementation actions and incentives that local and regional agencies might use to implement targeted land use changes would also be chosen, ideally leading to a “smart growth strategy” for the Bay Area.

Conclusion

Thus ends our concise history of ABAG. Except that more history lies in the future—if this picture is accurate of a large, diffuse group of people who in a very imperfect world, have managed to enjoy the good, surmount the bad, learn from both, move with the times, and help to make this unique area something better than it otherwise would be.

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