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Public Comment on the Draft Bay Area Plan and Draft EIR (State Clearinghouse #2012062029)

This letter is submitted on behalf of the more than 400 residents of Marinwood that signed this letter in opposition to the Draft Bay Area Plan and the Draft EIR. We are in favor of the “No Plan” option. As Marin County residents, we oppose implementation of the current Plan Bay Area draft for the following reasons:

1. Public Education and Outreach: Local public officials and ABAG/MTC staff, who are responsible for disseminating information in this Plan to the residents of Marin, have failed in this task. The vast majority of residents in our community are unaware of the details of this Plan.

Local comment meetings were a formality with the public expressing their anger at unresponsive panel members from MTC/ABAG.

Question: Is ABAG/MTC responsible to educate the public on their Plan and allow the public to receive answers to their questions? If yes, when will this occur in an open forum?

2. Plan Bay Area’s proposal to target residential development along highly traveled and congested freeways in Marin County where mobile and stationary sources of toxic air contaminants and primary PM-2.5 particulate matter is nothing short of irresponsible land use planning and conflicts with CEQA. These toxic materials are known to cause cancer and other health risks. The designation of low income housing PDAs in these transit corridors is irresponsible.

3. The Plan as proposed by ABAG/MTC uses statistics and data that is not current nor provided by several independent sources. Before implementing a plan that radically impacts this community for the next 50 years, it should have been properly vetted by the communities affected and all financial, environmental and social aspects discussed with the public. The Plan has not considered the impact on already overburdened infrastructure, e.g., water, sewer, schools and highways.

4. Housing development is being prioritized over building jobs: There are negative consequences in promoting housing that is not balanced with local employment opportunities. These mistakes were made by Vallejo, Stockton, Modesto and San

Bernardino, which all went bankrupt as a result of incorrect job and growth projections. Portland was another city which learned from this mistake.

5. Housing is being given priority over Transportation and Traffic Improvements: Planning for mass housing prior to implementing sufficient public transportation and infrastructure leads to grid lock and higher pollution. A legitimate transportation infrastructure needs to be effectuated before any housing developments are discussed.

Question: Does ABAG/MTC have proof that public transit and other forms of transit will not increase Green House Gas emissions above the levels that light trucks and cars are producing in Marin County.

6. A thorough analysis of alternatives to reducing Green House Gasses by high density Transit Oriented Development has not been conducted and current studies have discredited past findings contained in the DEIR.

Question: What is ABAG/MTC's current proof that high density transit oriented developments will reduce greenhouse gas emissions sufficiently to offset the impacts of these developments?

Question: Why does the Plan not address the CO2 emissions of all existing public transit systems in Marin (Golden Gate Transit buses and ferries) in comparison to ridership?

7. The "American Dream" for low and moderate income households is on life support with this Plan. The focus on high density rental housing near highways and relegating the poor into those areas is socially unfair. Real integration of housing, e.g., Habitat for Humanity single family home rehabilitation, second units, equity sharing programs, senior housing, and others allows the less fortunate to experience home ownership. Integration of all income classes in a community provides a diversity which has been the backbone of our country. A development can be successful with a combination of 80% market-rate and 20% affordable housing alternatives that provide starter homes for young couples. This ensures sustainability and a healthy community by providing resources to meet infrastructure needs and other public services.

8. The Plan does not recognize that residents need to use their vehicles to bring kids to school, sports practices, and trips to Home Depot where they might need to carry lumber and other supplies, doctor visits, and special events. The majority of

families in Marin could not use public transit for these activities and public transit would not meet their rigid timetables for family obligations as well.

Question: What studies have been done to confirm that Green House Gas emissions would be reduced by using public transit alternatives in comparison to light trucks and cars in view of the increased use of hybrid vehicles, later model high mileage gas vehicles, and other forms of transportation in Marin County?

The Draft Plan Bay Area's DEIR is inadequate in numerous instances, as identified in this Comment Letter.

Sincerely,

Stephen Nestel
Organized Residents of Marinwood

cc: Marin County Board of Supervisors: bos@marincounty.org