

Bay Area Alliance for Sustainable Development

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Association of Bay Area Governments,
Metro Center, Oakland

MINUTES

Gary Binger, Deputy Executive Director of the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), opened the meeting, **welcomed** everyone and provided introductory remarks. Among other things, he reported that ABAG's General Assembly, scheduled for April 27-28 in San Francisco, will focus on smart growth. He also indicated that ABAG is currently producing an inventory of smart growth practices.

Prior to discussing the agenda for the day, Peter Melhus of the Bay Area Alliance for Sustainable Development (Bay Area Alliance) briefly provided an update on the **Partnership for Regional Livability** (PRL) project. The PRL, affiliated with the President's Council on Sustainable Development and the Metropolitan Initiative, is conducting four pilot projects throughout the nation. These projects are regional initiatives intended to improve the quality of life in each region by forming partnerships between the pilot regions (San Francisco, Denver, Chicago and Atlanta) and between the regions and federal agencies. The Bay Area Alliance is the lead convenor for the Bay Area pilot project. Two projects are proposed for the Bay Area pilot: the Bay Area Footprint and the Community Capital Investment Initiative.

Carl Anthony led the discussion on **sustainable development indicators** to be considered by the Bay Area Alliance. After a brief description of the process that the Bay Area Alliance has conducted since the last meeting (October 28, 1999), and an overview of the proposed indicators that were included in the meeting briefing package, Carl asked the meeting participants to indicate their top three priorities in each of the ten groups of indicators (one for each of the *Compact 10* initiatives). Peter Melhus emphasized that the indicators adopted by the Bay Area Alliance will not be static. They are expected to change over time, as conditions in the Bay Area change or other methods of measurement or information become available.

Participants made several comments:

- Sherman Lewis of the Sierra Club suggested that the indicators proposed show substantial progress; they are "a creative and good set of indicators."
- Jake Mackenzie of the City of Rohnert Park opined that the indicators have come a long way toward reflecting his perception of the priorities of the Bay Area Alliance. He strongly supported the civic engagement indicator of "percent of people that vote."
- John Wise of EPA urged the Bay Area Alliance to start thinking about how it will sustain the indicator process over time. There is a need to invest substantial resources to get the information both initially and in the future, and to prepare the indicator reports. The Bay Area Alliance should not unduly delay securing and investing these resources.
- Charles McGlashan of Natural Strategies urged the Bay Area Alliance to separate truly wild land, paved areas, parks and greenbelts in the indicator(s) related to land and resources.

- Scott Edmondson of EIP Associates suggested that the goals and vision of the Bay Area Alliance be considered as the indicators are prioritized. He reminded the participants that the vision is on page 8 of the *Compact*. He also suggested that an indicator on inter-regional cooperation be added, since it is an integral part of sustainable development.

Carl Anthony concluded the discussion by requesting that the feedback forms indicating priority be returned no later than February 10. A summary of all the feedback received along with the aggregate prioritization of indicators for each section of the *Compact* is attached.

Andrew Michael and Michele Perrault led the discussion on **proposed modifications to the Transportation and Housing sections of the *Compact***.

The proposed modifications to the transportation section were necessitated by the perception that the *Compact* provided insufficient options for highways. The intended emphasis on transportation options was reiterated, focusing on a well-coordinated, seamless public transportation system that reduces single-occupancy vehicle travel, and optimizes access and the movement of people and goods. The modifications also recognize the importance of the maritime industry, including the port facilities. The primary change to the housing section was the recognition that even with the emphasis on all of the *Compact* strategies to improve density and the use of smart growth, it is possible that development will be necessary at the edge of the region. To the extent that such development is necessary the Bay Area Alliance advocates it be done in a sustainable way.

Participants made the following comments:

- Ellen Johnck of the Bay Planning Coalition pointed out the significant value of the process that the Bay Area Alliance had pursued. She characterized the process as “a good model of deliberation” and expressed her support of the changes proposed.
- Tom Steinbach of the Greenbelt Alliance expressed concern about the language. “The net effect is a drift toward business as usual.” He cited some specific examples of this “business as usual” concern. First, the title of the Housing Section of the *Compact* indicates that we will accommodate all job creation without regard to the carrying capacity of the Bay Area. Second, the phrase “while increasing ... developments on the urbanizing edge communities” is indicative of business as usual. He suggested that the Bay Area Alliance specify that all development be accommodated within infill areas.
- Rachel Peterson of Urban Ecology also expressed concern. She was a co-chair of the Jobs/Housing Working Group, which worked out the language that had been deleted in favor of the current language. She expressed concern that the process used to come to the new language was minimizing the efforts of the individuals involved in the Jobs/Housing Working Group. The new language essentially provides the flexibility for the Bay Area to continue to do what it has been doing.
- Eric Hasseltine of the Contra Costa Council expressed his support of the process and reiterated that the process was an effort to come to compromise language acceptable to all members of the Bay Area Alliance. The current language gives priority to transit (which he supports) but it also provides for other options.
- Michele Perrault suggested that the people involved in the discussion get together to try to come to consensus on this issue.
- Tom Steinbach agreed and suggested “I think we can get there.” He also urged the Bay Area Alliance to review the report jointly produced by the Greenbelt Alliance and Silicon Valley Manufacturing Group (www.svmg.org), which suggests that 99% of the projected needs of new housing in Silicon Valley can be met in the urban core.

Carl Anthony observed the significance, value and contribution that has been made already by the willingness of the Bay Area Alliance members to continue to engage with one another. He urged its continuance. He also co-chaired the Jobs/Housing Working Group and feels strongly about the importance of making a sharp change in business as usual. He reminded the group of the significant problem of gentrification that we face in Bay Area. "We're all asking that we all do a better job." He summarized the dialogue to this point by suggesting that several notions had been put on the table. He suggested that the challenge is to be more efficient in using housing stock; that there are and must be ways to accommodate growth without substantially changing the urban fabric. He supports another meeting of the caucuses to develop compromise language while considering the views expressed at this meeting.

- Rachel Peterson indicated her willingness to meet with the others and reminded everyone of the political power of a document such as the *Compact*, which has the support of leaders of the economic, social equity and environmental communities in the Bay Area.
- Sherman Lewis observed that housing need is driven by job growth. He suggested that some jobs are better than others, e.g., jobs that employ the disadvantaged are better than those that exacerbate the imbalance between jobs and housing in the Bay Area.
- Will Travis of the Bay Conservation and Development Commission expressed optimism that we can come to an agreement that has its first priority infill development but recognizes that other development might be necessary if infill does not satisfy the Bay Area's housing needs.
- John Wise suggested that the regional agencies be charged with developing a transportation language compromise. He also suggested that the Bay Area Alliance significantly enhance the linkage between air and water quality and policies implemented on transportation and housing.
- Phil Serna of the Home Builders Association of Northern California suggested that the compromise language include in the housing section of the *Compact* is not business as usual. His organization has been open to change. He suggested that the options of infill development and additional edge development be considered simultaneously rather than consecutively.
- Cynthia Murray of the Marin County Board of Supervisors suggested that "we're kidding ourselves if we think that business as usual is an option in the dynamic world we live in." "Sustainability is about integration." She pointed out that there are a lot of internal inconsistencies in the *Compact*. She would have a hard time taking the *Compact* to her public constituencies with these inconsistencies.
- Tom Jones of HUD suggested that this conversation should be put in context. The issue of jobs/housing balance is a national problem. The issue for the Bay Area Alliance is whether we can craft language we can live with. The Brookings Institution has researched the jobs/housing imbalance in 52 regions in the United States. Paradigms keep changing. Jobs should not be the only driver. Nobody is going to encourage business as usual.
- Reid Gustafson of Shea Homes agreed that the current language of the *Compact* is not business as usual. A lot of things in the *Compact* are new to home developers. The reality is that we need more housing in the region. This need must be met with a combination of strategies. Fifty percent of the growth that is projected in the Bay Area is internal and does not relate to immigration. The *Compact* must be realistic enough to accommodate growth. Growth will occur; the issue is how we best accommodate it.

Andrew Michael summarized the discussion: "from what we've heard, we can get there."

Gary Binger provided an update on the **public outreach efforts** of the Bay Area Alliance. The public relations firm Public Affairs Management has been engaged and is developing informational

materials that will be used in the public workshops, and a logo, and will be setting up a web site for the Bay Area Alliance in the next few months.

Members of the Steering Committee and others will conduct media briefings to generate interest for the public outreach workshops. The workshops will occur in May and June 2000. There will be a total of 12 workshops conducted, one in each of the nine counties comprising the Bay Area, and Bay Area-wide workshops for each of the three E's -- economy, environment and equity.

While discussing **next steps** Michele asked those who are interested in helping with the workshops contact the Bay Area Alliance to express their interest. Among other things, the names of people to be invited to these workshops are needed. She also stated that the Bay Area Alliance will communicate with its members and interested parties on the results of the feedback provided on the indicators. (A summary of the feedback received to date (February 25, 2000) is attached to these minutes.) She also suggested that we need to get a sense of the feasibility of collecting data on the indicators that we are reviewing.

The next meeting of the Bay Area Alliance is scheduled for May 4th at a location to be determined.

Carl Anthony facilitated the Public Comments section of the meeting. He suggested that comments referring to changes to the *Compact* beyond the two sections discussed (Housing and Transportation) or the indicators would be considered with comments received at the public outreach workshops and elsewhere when we consider revisions to the *Compact* after the public outreach.

Public comments:

- Mike Abkin (Sustainable Communities Forum) made six points resulting in recommended changes to the *Compact*:
 1. He suggested that if we accept that population growth and economic growth are inevitable, we might as well disband any efforts related to sustainability. Growth cannot be sustainable except within the bounds of carrying capacity. Additionally, economic competition is not sustainable. No region can be sustainable unless all regions are sustainable. Cooperation and mutual support, which still can work in recognition of comparative advantage, will be win-win and thus sustainable. Therefore, he suggested the following changes be made to the *Compact*:
 - a) Page 12, Commitment #1: "Maintain a diversified, sustainable, and prosperous economy that provides fulfilling jobs and a high quality of life for all Bay Area residents and that honors the sustainability rights of natural ecosystems in this and other regions."
 - b) Page 12, third bullet, split into two as follows:
 - *"Find and implement ways to ensure that any economic and population growth be allowed only within the carrying capacity of the region."
 - "Find and implement ways to ensure that all labor in the region is compensated sufficiently for all families to lead healthy and fulfilling lives."
 - c) Page 16, last bullet: "Ensuring that economic and population growth occur only within social, institutional, and natural carrying capacity to sustain it."
 2. A sustainable economy is more than just avoiding recession or narrowing the equity gap ("Challenges", page 9). Therefore, he suggested the following changes be made to the *Compact*:
 - d) Page 9, Challenge #1 (Sustainable Economy): add the following sentence: "The recovery has gone so well, in fact, that problems of traffic congestion, housing costs, destruction of natural

- ecosystems, and air and water pollution all suggest that economic activity in the region is approaching or has already surpassed the ability of cultural and natural systems to sustain it."
- e) Page 8 (Vision), first bullet under "The economy is prosperous": "The regional economy is robust, productivity is high, and overall economic activity and population grow no more than can be accommodated by the carrying capacity of the region and any region it imports from."
3. The vision for the preservation of agriculture must embrace consumer preferences for seasonal, locally grown, organic foods. Therefore, he suggested the following changes be made to the *Compact*: Page 8, split the second bullet under "Environmental quality is excellent" into two bullets:
 - * "Open space and ecologically sound agriculture are preserved as a result of efficient, compact land use patterns."
 - * "Food producers and consumers exhibit preferences for seasonal, locally grown, organically produced foods."
 4. Allowing for housing growth "on the edge of urbanized areas" is sprawl, even if avoiding environmentally sensitive areas. Any such growth should only be undertaken within the context of carrying capacity. The last sentence of the second paragraph on page 13 should be modified as follows: "Such growth should be managed in a way that uses land efficiently and reduces automobile dependency, and should only be allowed within the context of the carrying capacity of the region."
 5. Highway improvements beyond repair and maintenance must be held in abeyance until public transit/alternative modes are developed. Then we can see the true long-term needs within the context of carrying capacity. Therefore, the last bullet on page 14 should be restored to its previous wording.
 6. The Earth Charter (www.earthcharter.org) is an on-going living document that grew out of the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio. The Web site quotes the following goal: "Drafting a statement of ethical principles similar to the UN Declaration on Human Rights that will guide the conduct of people and nations towards each other and the Earth to ensure peace, equity and a sustainable future." Since the Earth Charter contains many of the principles espoused by the Alliance, the BAASD would do well to refer to the Earth Charter in the *Compact's* Preface section, perhaps immediately following PCSD item #16 at the top of page.
- Joyce Roy (Oakland Heritage Alliance) reminded the participants of her previous comments to the Bay Area Alliance about the importance of historical preservation within the context of sustainable development. She suggested that several additional bullets be added to the *Compact*.
 1. Under Commitment to Action #1., add the following bullet:
 - *encourage adaptive reuse of structures to conserve resources and create jobs.
 2. Under Commitment to Action #5., add the following bullet:
 - *encourage adaptive reuse of structures and recycling of construction materials.
 3. Under Commitment to Action #1., add the following bullet:
 - *encourage pride of place through preservation of historic resources, by offering financial incentives and providing opportunity for enhancing job skills of local residents.
 - Martin Squibbs (Foundation for a Global Community) suggested that indicators be chosen that are culturally independent, that avoid specific figures/targets (which would violate time independence) and that have clear cause and effect. He cited several examples.

First, the indicator “number of people per room for lower incomes” is not culturally independent. Many Asian communities prefer large family units. If people can live closely together in harmony this is good for sustainability, and could enrich lives. Second, the specific target in the indicator “percent of commutes less than 30 miles” may be problematic. This target could change over time, and there will always be argument over what figure to choose. He suggested monitoring "average length of commute" instead, and when the results are lower that is good. Finally, the indicator relating to congestion does not have clear cause and effect. Reducing congestion could be bad from a sustainability perspective, because it could mean that more highways are being built.

He also suggested several specific indicators that should be considered:

- growth in pollution taxes, e.g., greenhouse gas emissions, toxic waste, etc.;
- growth in subsidies for energy-efficient buildings and the use of renewable energy resources; and
- in place of measuring volunteerism in civic engagement, determine if people are happy in their civilized environment. Some measures that might be indicative are the percentage of time a person spends with family and friends (this could be at work - work for some is enjoyable and educational); and /or the time people spend in parks/ countryside.

Finally, Squibbs urged the Bay Area Alliance to focus on goals and priorities because this will enable everyone to agree. He suggested that the objective of the *Compact* is to unify people on direction, and not to specify the path and/or speed with which we get there. As soon as implementation and targets are discussed, conflict arises. The *Compact* needs to be the unifying document, to draw upon in the future when implementation conflict between groups arises "people, please remember our common goal in the *Compact*."

- Charles McGlashan (Natural Strategies) urged the Bay Area Alliance to proactively reach out to the people who were involved in the working groups to ensure that they stay engaged in the process. He suggested that the many inconsistencies in the *Compact* might be resolved by getting the working group members involved.

McGlashan also urged the Bay Area Alliance to be bold in its deliberations. He suggested that the Bay Area Alliance has the opportunity to establish a vision of hope. This vision of hope is much more important than the "reality check" that the Bay Area Alliance discussions often result in. “The market will serve as the reality check.” McGlashan suggested that the Bay Area Alliance needs to go well beyond the market economy and should establish an "audacious" vision.

- Sherman Lewis (Sierra Club) acknowledged that the current version of the *Compact* is probably not audacious from his perspective, but that it is better than the status quo; “therefore the Bay Area Alliance should move ahead with it.” He also expressed his support for looking further at the possibility of transportation pricing reform and suggested that the *Compact* language on this issue has been weakened from "support" to "discuss."
- Rich Morrison expressed concern about some of the indicators and the democratic process proposed for prioritizing them. He suggested that the intellectual appeal of the Genuine Progress Indicator and the Ecological Footprint is so significant that if they do not end up among the indicators adopted by the Bay Area Alliance, they should be developed on a parallel track.

- Irwin Mussen (Urban Habitat) characterized the efforts of the Bay Area Alliance as trying to progress toward developing and implementing a strategy for regional cooperation that includes the three E's. He emphasized the importance of organizational structure.
- John Wise (EPA) advised the group that it is being watched nationally. He suggested that there is a considerable amount interest in what is taking place here the Bay Area. Many people throughout the nation are looking for model. "Whether we like it or not, we are a model!" He urged that all members of the Bay Area Alliance consider, in addition to their own self-interest, "our collective obligation to the rest of the country." He urged all members to continue to stay engaged in the process of the Bay Area Alliance.
- Michelle Perrault (Sierra Club) acknowledged the value of the volunteered time and effort of all the people that have been involved in the Bay Area Alliance, it's working groups and working caucuses and interested parties. She suggested that those that are most interested in the concept of carrying capacity to become more engaged with one another to ensure that the topic continues to be considered by the Bay Area Alliance.
- Tom Jones (HUD) pointed out that the effort of the Bay Area Alliance was unique since it is dealing with a polycentric metropolitan area. He encouraged the Bay Area Alliance to ensure that the region does not improve at the expense other localities within it. He also suggested much of the data for the indicators is currently available. He suggested that the Bay Area Alliance begin the process of identifying those data.
- Douglas Johnson (consultant) expressed his surprise at the lack of any indicators addressing community food security, a "cornerstone of sustainability." He suggested that indicators such as acres of farmland protected are useful, but don't tell us about the quality, quantity and proximity of food. A Bay Area dependent on food imported from outside the region has a much larger "foodshed" and ecological footprint than a Bay Area that has local and regional food systems. He questioned whether the indicators currently being considered by the Bay Area Alliance are merely reflective of information currently available, rather than seeking to determine information indicative of the phenomenon we are targeting. As an example, he cited his perceived hesitation by some participants to support indicators such as the Genuine Progress Indicator and the Ecological Footprint because of their unfamiliarity. He also suggested that prioritizing the indicators currently presented at the meeting is premature.
- Jean Matsuura (League of Women Voters) reminded everyone that the public workshops are approaching. It is critical that we come to agreement on the *Compact*. The indicator process has been very helpful for educating participants in the Bay Area Alliance. She suggested that the indicators may also be helpful in subregional areas throughout the Bay Area.
- Cynthia Murray (Marin County Supervisor) suggested the need for more feedback from the governmental sector. Revised county plans are currently being considered under the umbrella of sustainable development. Counties need to be aware of the provisions of the *Compact* as they go through the revision process.
- Jake Mackenzie (City of Rohnert Park) suggested that more connection with the state legislative and executive branches is essential. They need to be involved.

The meeting adjourned at 11:50 AM.