



THE LEAGUES
OF WOMEN VOTERS
*of the Monterey Peninsula,
Salinas Valley and Santa Cruz County*

June 22, 2011

Stephany Aguilar
President
AMBAG
P.O. Box 809
Marina, CA 93933

SUBJECT: SUPPORT FOR REGIONAL PLANNING

Dear President Aguilar and Members of the Board of Directors:

The Leagues of Women Voters of Santa Cruz County, Monterey Peninsula and Salinas Valley would like to take this opportunity to support regional planning in the three county area. We are aware of efforts to change or eliminate the regional planning functions of AMBAG. Because of our long-standing support for regional planning for land use, transportation and air quality, we urge the Board to make every effort to assure that those functions continue within the region while addressing short-comings of the existing organization that may exist.

AMBAG was formed in 1968 as a forum for collaboration and communication. It played an invaluable role in coordinating such efforts as opposing exported wastewater from the Santa Clara Valley and the Kesterson drain to the Monterey Bay and supporting formation of the Monterey Bay Sanctuary. The functions identified below are currently performed by AMBAG. They are regional in scope and cannot be effectively performed by single county organizations:

1. As the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), AMBAG is responsible for preparing the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP).
2. If transportation conformity determinations are required again because the North Central Coast Air Basin fails to meet the federal ozone standard, the MPO plays a critical role in transportation and general conformity determinations.
3. As the MPO, AMBAG is required to approve federal plans to meet federal ambient air quality standards for ozone.
4. AMBAG prepares population, employment and housing forecasts that are used in regional plans including those for water, transportation and air quality. Using a common set of forecasts assures consistency from one regional plan to another.
5. AMBAG's transportation model is used by the Air Resources Board (ARB) to prepare mobile source emission inventories for air quality plans. The population, employment and housing forecasts are used to forecast population-related emissions.

6. AMBAG negotiates with the California Department of Housing and Community Development regarding regionwide fair share allocations for housing and works with cities and the counties to disaggregate allocations.
7. AMBAG is preparing the SB375 plan having already laid the ground work with the Blueprint. AMBAG has also prepared baseline emission inventories for local GHG action plans, a unique accomplishment in California.

The Board may wish to review regional structures currently used throughout California to determine their applicability to our three county region. For example, the Bay Area has a transportation planning agency (Metropolitan Transportation Commission) which combines the functions of all county transportation agencies into a single organization leaving other regional planning efforts to the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD). In Southern California, the Southern California Association of Governments performs functions very similar to those currently performed by AMBAG.

The Leagues appreciate your dedication to effective regional governance, and we look forward to your efforts to assure that regional cooperation continues.

Sincerely,

Beverly Bean
LWV of the Monterey Peninsula

Jan Karwin
LWV of Santa Cruz County

Mary Ellen Dick
LWV of Salinas Valley

cc: Rich Stedman, MBUAPCD
TAMC
SCCRTC
San Benito County COG
AMBAG Cities and Counties