



**Directors**

**Paul Kelley, Chair**  
Sonoma County

**Robert Jehn, V. Chair**  
Cloverdale

**Steve Allen**  
Windsor

**Bob Blanchard**  
Santa Rosa

**Stanley Cohen**  
Sonoma

**Patricia Gilardi**  
Cotati

**Mike Healy**  
Petaluma

**Linda Kelley**  
Sebastopol

**Mike Kerns**  
Sonoma County

**Jake Mackenzie**  
Rohnert Park

**Lisa Schaffner**  
Healdsburg

**Tim Smith**  
Sonoma County

**Citizens Advisory Committee**

**AGENDA**

**April 25, 2005 – 4:00 p.m.**

Sonoma County Transportation Authority  
520 Mendocino Avenue, Suite 240A, Santa Rosa, California

**ITEM**

- I.** Introductions
- II.** Consent Items - **DISCUSSION/ACTION**
  - A. Approval of Minutes from March 28, 2005
  - B. Approval of Agenda
- III.** Announcements/Reports – **DISCUSSION/ACTION**
- IV.** Update on Measure M Strategic Plan – **DISCUSSION/ACTION**
  - A. Discussion on project selection and funding constraints
  - B. Next Steps
- V.** Update on TPLUS Activities – **DISCUSSION/ACTION**
- VI.** Announcements / Other Business - **DISCUSSION**
- VII.** Adjournment - **ACTION**

---

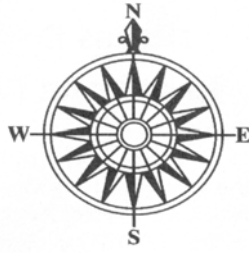
The next **S C T A** meeting will be held **May 9, 2005**

The next **C A C** meeting will be held **June 27, 2005**

DISABLED ACCOMMODATION: If you have a disability that requires the agenda materials to be in an alternate format or that requires an interpreter or other person to assist you while attending this meeting, please contact SCTA at least 72 hours prior to the meeting to ensure arrangements for accommodation.

**Suzanne Wilford**  
Executive Director

520 Mendocino Avenue  
Suite 240  
Santa Rosa, CA 95401  
PH: 707-565-5373  
FAX: 707-565-5370



## Staff Report

**To:** Planning Advisory Committee  
**From:** SCTA staff  
**Re:** MTC's SMART Corridor TOD Policy  
**Date:** April 21, 2005

---

**Issue:**

What recommendations does the PAC have regarding key policy questions contained in MTC's Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Policy for the SMART corridor?

**Background:**

As per the February PAC meeting MTC is developing a regional TOD policy, that builds on the regional Transit Expansion Program (known as 'Resolution 3434') and the Transportation and Land Use platform adopted by MTC in 2003. The Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) corridor is included in Resolution 3434. The approved TOD policy will guide funding available for station area planning along the corridor and may affect SMART's ability to access RM-2 funds.

A memo (to follow the staff report in its entirety) was addressed to MTC Commissioners on April 6. Several assumptions were stated.

- (a) A corridor approach to land use thresholds for housing and employment densities along corridors that allows station-by-station variation and flexibility;
- (b) Land use thresholds that vary by mode of transit, with more capital-intensive projects like BART extensions and light rail expansions having higher land use expectations;
- (c) Land use thresholds that are based on both what's already on the ground and what local jurisdictions plan for in the future;
- (d) A requirement to prepare individual station area plans—which MTC would help fund—to plan for increased land use densities, access, design standards, parking and other amenities based on the unique circumstances of each station area and city;
- (e) Creation of Corridor Working Groups that would bring together local government staff, transit agencies, congestion management agencies and other key stakeholders with an interest in TOD along the corridor to help develop station area plans to meet the MTC corridor-wide land use

thresholds. The draft TOD policy assumes that the CMAs will take a lead role in organizing these working groups.

These assumptions have been developed in discussion with numerous committee meetings during the past year. In fact, the SMART Corridor Working Group met in Petaluma on March 31.

A set of nine policy questions was also asked. Many of these had been discussed in either PAC or in TPLUS meetings, some in part, some in whole. Following are the questions (in italics) and staff response.

#### MTC policy questions

1) *MTC Funding Leverage*

*The Commission's leverage for the TOD policy is financial, based on the fact that regional discretionary dollars are being used to fund the Resolution 3434 projects. But should MTC's TOD policy apply to all Resolution 3434 projects regardless of how much regional discretionary funding the project requires? Or should there be a threshold for the portion of the total project cost that is regionally funded—a specific dollar amount or percentage—below which the regional TOD policy wouldn't apply?*

Of the regional funding that MTC is considering leveraging the SMART corridor is currently slated to receive only RM-2 funds (approximately \$35 million for the extension to the ferry terminal).

Additionally, MTC staff has talked about funding some station area plans.

2) *Exemptions of special projects at existing stations*

*In addition to potentially exempting projects from the Resolution 3434 TOD policy that only use a small amount of regional funding, should an exemption also be extended to projects that are more limited in scope and don't include the addition of any new stations, such as electrification projects and service upgrades along existing corridors?*

3) *Corridor Land Use Thresholds*

*The draft TOD policy white paper suggests two options for the corridor level thresholds—a housing only threshold and a combined jobs plus housing threshold. Members of the JPC and others have expressed interest in maintaining a requirement for some level of employment to be planned for in addition to housing in the corridors. Yet some local jurisdictions have expressed concern over their ability to measure future employment in station areas. What are the most appropriate threshold measures for the corridors?*

This issue has generated considerable discussion. We are uncertain about how realistic the stated thresholds are. There has also been the suggestion that some stations be exempted because of their lack of developable land (due to environmental concerns and the proximity to Highway 101).

Currently, MTC is proposing two alternative target development ranges for the SMART corridor. The first alternative would be based solely on the residential

density surrounding SMART stations. The second alternative would be based on a combination of residential and employment densities surrounding the stations. In both alternatives, target development ranges would be calculated by averaging the level of development across the entire corridor. In theory, using averages for the corridor would allow the most developed station areas to compensate for the least developed. The range currently being proposed by MTC for the residential measure is 6,000 – 16,000 population within a ½ mile radius of the stations. The combined residential/employment measure being proposed is 15,000 – 25,000 population and/or jobs within the ½ mile radius.

With the assistance of Calthorpe Associates, MTC has completed a preliminary data analysis aimed at assessing the degree to which existing and future development surrounding SMART stations falls within their proposed ranges. Using Census 2000 data and ABAG 2030 projections, MTC developed a set of Transit Planning Areas (TPAs). Each TPA is an aggregation of Census Blocks, and they were used to summarize data at a relatively coarse level around each SMART station. From there, generalized land use data (obtained from ABAG) for each jurisdiction was used to analyze development at a much finer level within ½ mile radii of the stations.

At both the March PAC meeting as well as the initial corridor planning meeting, local officials from Sonoma and Marin strongly contested MTC's assertion that development along the SMART corridor, on average, already meets or will meet the minimum development thresholds being proposed. In order to address local concern, SCTA staff is in the process of replicating MTC's data analysis using the land use specifications derived from the most recent countywide travel model data inputs from both counties. These specifications are presumably much more accurate than either the Census or ABAG data because they are the specifications currently being used for most long-range planning activities. Once SCTA's analysis is complete, the degree to which the corridor as a whole actually falls within MTC's proposed development ranges will be much more apparent.

4) *Treatment of Affordable housing*

*Much of the research around TOD suggests that lower-income households are much more likely to ride transit. Another key policy issue for the Commission to consider is to what extent affordable housing should be part of MTC's larger TOD policy. Should there be requirements for affordable housing either in the Station Area Plans or at the corridor level as part of the thresholds? Alternatively, can there be some sort of incentive or bonus provided for affordable housing as part of the corridor thresholds?*

Affordable Housing is called out in the SMART TOD policy because of its proven ability to deliver transit riders. This topic is under discussion at TPLUS. Many general plans (Healdsburg, Rohnert Park, Santa Rosa and the County) list affordable housing as a goal.

5) Landbanking has not been discussed in TPLUS or PAC.

6) *MTC funding for Station Area Plans.*

*Included in the (MTC) Transportation Land Use Platform was a commitment to use a portion of regional funds available under the TLC/HIP programs to help finance local Station Area Plans. Should MTC Station Area Planning funds be available for all stations in Resolution 3434 corridors? Or should MTC allow existing station areas*

*around the region also to compete for the funds? What portion of future regional TLC/HIP funding should be dedicated to Station Area Plans? Should the CMAs be asked to use a portion of the county TLC/HIP funding to supplement the regional commitment to Station Area Plans?*

There is enthusiasm for development of Station Area Plans. There has been general agreement that corridor wide planning would be beneficial and that MTC's offer of funding for such plans would be welcome. Also, there was agreement that the SCTA make some portion of TLC/HIP funds available for Station Area Planning.

7) *Regional TOD Design Standards*

*Should MTC develop its own regional TOD design standards that any recipients of the Station Area Planning grants must adhere to? Or should MTC rely on other TOD design guidelines that already exist – some published by other Bay Area transit agencies such as BART, Caltrain and VTA – and use them as suggested guidelines that local jurisdictions can use?*

It is still unknown what standards MTC may use. "Regional Standards" often are not appropriate for Sonoma County preferred the use of guidelines instead of standards attached to funding.

8) *Parking Management*

*As many of you know and as much of the research also suggests, parking management is also a critical component of any successful TOD. The establishment of maximum parking requirements, shared parking, and pricing of parking in both residential and commercial developments can be important tools in an overall TOD strategy for a station area. But what requirements or incentives, if any, should MTC provide around parking as part of the overall TOD policy? Should MTC require use of regionally developed TOD parking policies within station areas, or require use of locally developed TOD parking policies? Or should MTC merely suggest a menu of parking policies that local jurisdictions could consider, but avoid requiring either standards or studies?*

Discussions about this policy question are not developed enough to provide substantive comment. Research done by SMART has indicated that some stations will be more dependent on park and ride riders and thus require parking, than others.

9) *Auto-Dependent Uses – Some TOD experts also suggest that larger-scale auto-dependent uses like big box retail are incompatible with transit-oriented developments. Still others suggest that big box retail can co-exist comfortably in a TOD as long as it incorporates pedestrian-friendly design elements and minimizes land dedicated to parking. Should MTC incorporate any requirements for local jurisdictions to prohibit auto-dependent uses in the TOD policy? Should MTC ask local jurisdictions to incorporate designs that are more inviting and safer for pedestrians such as smaller block sizes and wider sidewalks? Or should MTC defer to local decision-making on this issue and offer only suggested guidelines for local jurisdictions to follow as part of their station area planning process?*

While this policy was not explicitly discussed at PAC or TPLUS, preference for pedestrian-friendly designs is stated in the draft policy framework developed by

TPLUS last week. However, prohibition of auto dependent uses, and reconfiguration of block sizes may be considered impractical in Sonoma County.

**Policy Impacts:**

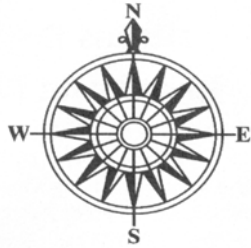
MTC, SMART, SCTA and each city should have policies that work together.

**Fiscal Impacts:**

SMART and local jurisdictions may qualify for funding for station area planning. SMART is eligible for \$34 million in RM-2 funds which may be tied to the performance measures contained in MTC's TOD policy.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Make recommendations to MTC about their TOD policy. MTC will release their final draft on May 13.



## Staff Report

**To:** Planning Advisory Committee  
**From:** Janet Spilman  
**Re:** SCTA TOD Policy – TPLUS committee draft  
**Date:** April 21, 2005

---

**Issue:**

The Transportation Planning Land Use Strategies (TPLUS) an ad hoc committee composed of Sonoma County residents interested in Smart Growth

**Background:**

The SCTA is tasked with developing a Best Practices Manual for Smart Growth and Transit Oriented Development. The following policy framework came out of TPLUS meetings and serves as a basis for a policy paper.

**Policy Impacts:**

MTC, SMART, SCTA and each city should have policies that work together.

**Fiscal Impacts:**

Policies developed for the Best Practices Manual may be used as criteria for Smart Growth related fund sources (e.g. TLC/HIP)

**Staff Recommendation:**

Review the attached policy framework.

Transportation Planning Land Use Strategy (TPLUS)  
DRAFT Guiding Policy Statement for Promoting and Implementing Transit Oriented  
Development in Sonoma County

## **Putting Transit Oriented Development (TOD) in the Sonoma County Context**

### ***Vision***

*A network of cities and local communities connected by a comprehensive multimodal transportation system and land use configurations that significantly reduce the level of automobile dependency while increasing the health and well being of all Sonoma County residences.*

### ***Mission***

*Develop the policy framework and implementation strategies necessary to successfully build community support for TOD projects that: (1) improve access to public transportation, (2) make communities more pedestrian and bicycle friendly, (3) and create new living spaces that better serve the daily activities of Sonoma County residences by interfacing with a more diversified set of mobility options.*

### **Goals and Objectives**

- Support community focused development
  - Build closer-knit communities by increasing the availability of affordable housing and access to a well maintained multimodal transportation system.
  - Transform land use patterns and reconfigure transportation networks to better preserve open space and protect the environment.
  - Ensure Communities are pedestrian friendly and readily accessible by non-motorized modes of transportation.
- Increase availability of public transportation
  - Reduce the level of automobile dependence in Sonoma County by increasing people's access to alternate modes of transportation.
  - Help reduce commute distances and volumes by implementing multimodal transportation solutions that interface with transit friendly, mixed-use community development.
- Codify TOD principles in the planning process
  - Advocate for city-centered local general plan and zoning regulation amendments that provide maximum flexibility in assigning land use designations and development densities.
- Improve the jobs/housing balance and grow local economy
  - Increase availability of affordable housing
  - Develop new economic incentives to attract new businesses to Sonoma County and stimulate local job growth

o

pressdemocrat.com

This is a printer friendly version of an article from [www.pressdemocrat.com](http://www.pressdemocrat.com)

To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

[Back](#)

---

Article published - Apr 15, 2005

## **Bay Area population growth resumes after 3-year lull**

**CENSUS FIGURES SHOW NAPA COUNTY LED UPSWING; SONOMA COUNTY MAINTAINS SLOW GROWTH RATE**

**By MARTIN ESPINOZA**

**THE PRESS DEMOCRAT**

The Bay Area's overall population last year grew for the first time in three years, with Napa County leading the nine-county pack, according to population estimates released Thursday by the Census Bureau.

But growth in Bay Area counties remained among the slowest in the state, far behind the pace of Southern and Central California counties as residents go in search of affordable housing within striking distance of jobs.

Sonoma County's population grew to 468,450, an increase of only a quarter of 1 percent from 2003 to 2004 - slow growth that's been constant for the past five years.

The county ranks fourth in percent of population growth among Bay Area counties since 2000, with a 2.14 percent growth rate. But it ranks 44th of California's 58 counties.

The state Department of Finance also tracks growth and reported slightly different numbers in February. But the growth trends appeared consistent between the two agencies.

Napa County hit 132,339, up 0.45 percent between 2003 and 2004. Fast-growing Napa County municipalities, such as American Canyon, were behind that county's growth of 6.49 percent since 2000.

"American Canyon was a sleepy little part of the valley until a couple years ago," said Kim Alexander, a real estate agent for Napa-based Coldwell Banker Brokers of the Valley. "Hundreds of homes have been added in recent years."

One such housing development, Vintage Ranch, is made up of 600 homes in four neighborhoods. The area boasts a new middle school and easy access to Sonoma and Napa counties, the East Bay and San Francisco, she said.

In Lake County, the population grew by 1.65 percent to 64,446. But the county has grown by more than 10 percent during the past five years, making its percent of population gain 12th among the state's counties.

Mendocino County's population hit 88,551, up by 2.65 percent during the past five years, placing it 41st.

Robert Eyler, chairman of the economics department at Sonoma State University, said it's not surprising to see greater population growth in such places as Lake and Napa counties, where housing is more affordable than in Sonoma or Marin counties.

"In Napa, you're going to get the natural overflow from Marin and Sonoma because the cost of living was less," Eyler said. "But not by much anymore because of that."

He said population growth usually lags behind economic growth, which has in some ways improved in Sonoma County.

"Economically, there is productivity growth," he said. "But the income growth is not as fast because wages are not rising as fast as in previous periods. For example, during the last growth phase in the late 1990s."

Windsor Mayor Steve Allen agreed people are moving to outlying areas, such as Lake County. Growth restrictions, such as the ones that have kept in check the number of new homes in Windsor, are driving up home prices in the area.

"I'm not advocating that they open up limits on housing," he said. "Everybody wants to keep growth rates at reasonable levels. But it certainly adds to the cost of housing. People are going to other counties to live because they can't afford homes here anymore."

The Census Bureau found that greater Los Angeles continued a growth spurt that has redefined the region's outer reaches.

That region added 260,002 people, with Riverside County adding 89,128 residents from 2003 to 2004 for a total of 1.87 million. That gave Riverside the biggest numerical population increase in the state and the second of any county in the nation. Arizona's Maricopa County was first at 112,000.

San Francisco, which at a population of 744,230 had 7,678 fewer residents in July 2004 than it had a year earlier, again led the state both in the size and rate of its population decline. Since 2000, the city has lost 32,435 people, or 4.2 percent of its population, according to the Census Bureau.

California added 431,087 residents from 2003 to 2004, a 1.2 percent growth rate that pushed the population to 35.9 million, according to the census estimates. Since the start of the decade, California has grown by about 2.2 million residents.

But the population estimate varies significantly from the figures calculated by the state Department of Finance, which show California has gained 2.7 million people since 2000. The difference is significant because federal funding is often predicated on population.

Nationally, according to the Census Bureau, Florida's Flagler County, south of Jacksonville, ranked first last year in percentage change for its 10.1 percent one-year population increase.

Kendall County, Ill., outside Chicago, ranked second, at 8.3 percent, and the Washington suburb of Loudoun County, Va., grew 8.1 percent.

The census figures showed that 83 of the 100 fastest-growing communities last year were in the South and West, continuing a pattern that has prevailed for decades.

Article published - Apr 15, 2005

## **Home sales, prices soaring**

**BAY AREA RESALE MEDIAN COST TOPS \$600,000 DESPITE HIGHER INTEREST RATES**

**By MICHAEL COIT**

**THE PRESS DEMOCRAT**

Rising mortgage rates did not deter Bay Area homebuyers in March as sales rose and the median home resale price topped \$600,000 for the first time.

Demand rebounded from a winter slowdown with buyers giving the market a push heading into spring, according to the latest report from DataQuick Information Systems, a La Jolla real estate market research company.

Interest rates increased for seven consecutive weeks and rose above 6 percent in March, but have fallen back in April.

The 11,442 sales total was the most for the nine-county Bay Area region in March since 1989. The total takes in all new and resale houses and condominiums.

"Demand still appears to be stronger than supply, which puts upward pressure on prices. People seem to be increasingly willing to let the homes they live in represent a higher portion of their net worth," said Marshall Prentice, DataQuick president.

The region's March median resale price of \$605,000 was up more than 6 percent from \$569,000 in February and more than 21 percent from \$499,000 a year ago.

Sonoma County sales also were strong in March.

DataQuick calculated the county's median home resale price was \$528,000, up a fraction from \$525,000 in February and more than 21 percent from \$433,000 a year ago. A separate report is due out as early as today on single-family home sales and prices in Sonoma County. That report, which does not include homes listed for sale by owners, last month placed the February median a bit higher at \$550,000.

The typical monthly mortgage payment that Bay Area buyers committed themselves to paying was \$2,566 in March - an all-time high - compared with \$2,052 a year ago, DataQuick said.

Interest rates climbed throughout March. The average interest rate for a fixed rate, 30-year loan topped 6 percent for the first time since July. The average interest rate has dipped so far in April and remains near historic lows, helping more buyers stay in the market despite rising prices.

With prices rising, competition continues to be strongest around the median price.