

Citizens' Guide to "Transportationese"

copied largely from *Citizen's Guide to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission* 2002

In the transportation arena confusing lingo will cloud communication. For that we apologize and hope that one day "transportationese" will be a forgotten dialect. Until that day, interested citizens can make use of the following glossary of acronyms and terms:

ABAG *Association of Bay Area Governments*: A voluntary association of counties and cities that is the general planning agency for the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area. Also provides demographic, financial, administrative, training and conference services to local governments and businesses. A member sits on MTC.

ADA *Americans With Disabilities Act*: Federal civil rights legislation for disabled persons passed in 1990; calls on public transit systems to make their services more fully accessible, as well as to underwrite a parallel network of paratransit service.

BAAQMD *Bay Area Air Quality Management District*: (Also known as the Air District, since the acronym seems to take longer to say than the full name.) Regulates industry and employers to keep air pollution in check and sponsors programs to clean the air. The Air District works with MTC and the Association of Bay Area Governments on issues that affect transportation, land use and air quality.

Caltrans *California Department of Transportation*: The state agency that operates California's highway system.

Capital revenues: Moneys dedicated for new projects to cover one-time costs, such as construction of roads, transit lines and facilities, or purchase of buses and rail cars.

CMA *Congestion Management Agency*: A countywide agency responsible for preparing and implementing a county's Congestion Management Program. CMAs came into existence as a result of state legislation and voter approval of Prop. 111 in 1990. Subsequent legislation made optional the requirement for counties to have a CMA. Most Bay Area counties still have them.

CMAQ *Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program*: A pot of federal money contained in TEA 21 for projects and activities that reduce congestion and improve air quality, both in regions not yet attaining federal air quality standards and those engaged in efforts to preserve their attainment status.

CTC *California Transportation Commission*: A state-level commission, consisting of nine members appointed by the governor, that establishes priorities and allocates funds for highway, passenger rail and transit investments throughout California. The CTC works with the state Business, Transportation and Housing Agency in overseeing Caltrans, and participates in the development of state and federal legislation that affects transportation funding.

CTP *Comprehensive Transportation Plan for Sonoma County (formerly the Countywide Transportation Plan)* The countywide transportation planning document approved by the SCTA. The purpose of the Plan is primarily to update past transportation planning efforts in order to prioritize transportation needs throughout Sonoma County for the next 25 years.

FHWA *Federal Highway Administration*: U.S. Department of Transportation agency responsible for administering the federal highway aid program to individual states, and helping to plan, develop and coordinate construction of federally funded highway projects. FHWA also governs the safety of hazardous cargo on the nation's highways.

FTA *Federal Transit Administration*: U.S. Department of Transportation agency that provides financial and planning assistance to help plan, build, and operate rail, bus and paratransit systems. The agency also assists in the development of local and regional traffic reduction programs.

HIP *Housing Incentive Program*: An incentive program initiated by MTC in 2000 that provides seed money to municipalities and their development partners to encourage the development of compact residential communities near public transit hubs.

HOV Lane *High-Occupancy-Vehicle Lane*: The technical term for a carpool lane, commuter lane or diamond lane.

Intermodal: The term "mode" is used to refer to and to distinguish from each other the various forms of transportation, such as automobile, transit, ship, bicycle and walking. Intermodal refers specifically to the connections between modes.

ISTEA *Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act*: Pronounced "Ice Tea," this landmark federal legislation signed into law in 1991 initiated broad changes in the way transportation decisions are made. ISTEA emphasized diversity and balance of modes, as well as the preservation of existing systems before construction of new facilities. ISTEA expired in 1997, but much of its program structure was carried forward in successor federal legislation (see TEA 21).

ITIP *Interregional Transportation Improvement Program*: A state funding program intended to address needs that cross metropolitan boundaries. Caltrans nominates and the CTC approves a listing of interregional highway and rail projects for 25 percent of the funds to be programmed in the STIP (the other 75 percent are RTIP funds, see below).

Lifeline Transportation Network: An MTC initiative to enhance low-income residents' access to key destinations such as job centers, government buildings and medical facilities during both peak commute periods and off-peak hours. While most of the Lifeline network identified by MTC is already served by existing transit routes, some low-income communities and/or destinations are not served by transit or lack service at specific times of day. MTC is working with transit operators and potential funding partners to fill these gaps in the network.

LIFT *Low-Income Flexible Transportation*: An MTC program that provides financial assistance for services to help low-income residents get to and from work and other

locations. Examples of eligible LIFT projects include new and expanded public transit services, transportation to child care centers, development of child care facilities at transit hubs, rideshare activities and "guaranteed ride home" programs.

MPO *Metropolitan Planning Organization*: A federally required planning body responsible for the transportation planning and project selection in its region; the governor designates an MPO in every urbanized area with a population of over 50,000. MTC is the Bay Area's MPO.

MTC *Metropolitan Transportation Commission*: The transportation planning, financing and coordinating agency for the nine counties that touch San Francisco Bay.

MTS *Metropolitan Transportation System*: A defined network of streets and roads, highways, mass transit routes, bikeways, transfer points, airports and seaports considered essential to regional mobility.

Multimodal: Refers to the availability of multiple transportation options, especially within a system or corridor. A multimodal approach to transportation planning focuses on the most efficient way of getting people or goods from place to place, be it by truck, train, bicycle, automobile, airplane, bus, boat or foot.

Operating funds: Moneys used to fund general, day-to-day costs of running transportation systems. For transit, costs include fuel, salaries and replacement parts; for roads, operating costs involve maintaining pavement, filling potholes, paying workers' salaries, and so forth.

Paratransit: Door-to-door bus, van and taxi services used to transport elderly and disabled riders. Sometimes referred to as dial-a-ride service, since trips are made according to demand instead of along a fixed route or according to a fixed schedule.

Program: (1) *verb*, to assign funds to a project that has been approved by MTC, the state or other agency; (2) *noun*, a system of funding for implementing transportation projects or policies, such as through the State Transportation Improvement Program (see STIP).

Resolution 3434: An identified list of high-priority rail and express bus improvements to serve the Bay Area's most congested corridors. MTC adopted Resolution 3434 in December 2001 to establish clear priorities for the investment of transit expansion funds.

RTIP *Regional Transportation Improvement Program*: A listing of highway and transit projects that the region hopes to fund; compiled by MTC every two years from priority lists submitted by local jurisdictions. The California Transportation Commission (CTC) must either approve or reject the RTIP list in its entirety. Once the CTC approves an RTIP, it is combined with those from other regions to comprise 75 percent of the funds in the STIP (see below).

RTP *Regional Transportation Plan*: A blueprint to guide the region's transportation development for a 25-year period. Updated every three years, it is based on projections of growth and travel demand coupled with financial projections. Required by state and federal law.

RTPA *Regional Transportation Planning Agency*: Regional Transportation Planning Agency: A state-designated agency responsible for preparing the Regional Transportation Plan and the Regional Transportation Improvement Program, administering state funds, and other tasks. MTC is the Bay Area's RTPA.

SCTA *Sonoma County Transportation Authority*: The SCTA acts as the countywide planning and programming agency for transportation related issues: securing funds, project oversight and long term planning.

SHOPP *State Highway Operations and Protection Program*: State funding program for highway projects that will improve traffic safety; preserve bridges, roadways and/or roadsides; increase mobility; or improve facilities related to the state highway system.

SMART GROWTH: There is no single definition of smart growth: its meaning depends on context, speaker and timeframe. The common thread among different perspectives of smart growth is development that revitalizes central cities and older suburbs, supports and enhances public transit and preserves open spaces and agricultural lands. Smart growth is not no growth; rather it creates communities that are more livable by developing efficiently within the already built environment.

SOV *Single-occupant vehicle*: A vehicle with one occupant, the driver, who is sometimes referred to as a "drive alone."

STA *State Transit Assistance*: Provides funding for mass transit operations and capital projects.

STIP *State Transportation Improvement Program*: What the CTC ends up with after combining various RTIPs as well as a list of specific projects proposed by Caltrans. Covering a five-year span and updated every two years, the STIP determines when and if transportation projects will be funded by the state.

STP *Surface Transportation Program*: One of the key funding programs in TEA 21. STP monies are "flexible," meaning they can be spent on mass transit, pedestrian and bicycle facilities as well as on roads and highways.

TCM *Transportation Control Measure*: A strategy to reduce driving or smooth traffic flows in order to cut auto emissions and resulting air pollution. Required by the Clean Air Act, TCMs for the Bay Area are jointly developed by MTC, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District and ABAG. Examples of TCMs include roving tow truck patrols to clear stalls and accidents from congested roadways, new or increased transit service, or a program to promote carpools and vanpools.

TCRP *Traffic Congestion Relief Program*: A five-year state transportation investment plan passed by the California Legislature and signed into law by Governor Gray Davis in 2000. The plan originally called for \$6.8 billion of spending (with \$1.7 billion to the Bay Area) from fiscal 2000-01 to 2005-06, but subsequent refinancing agreements postponed the funding until fiscal 2002-03 to 2007-08.

TDA *Transportation Development Act*: State law enacted in 1971. TDA funds are generated from a tax of one-quarter of one percent on all retail sales in each county; used for transit, special transit for disabled persons, and bicycle and pedestrian purposes, they are collected by the state and allocated by MTC to fund transit operations and programs. In non-urban areas, TDA funds may be used for streets and roads under certain conditions.

TE *Transportation Enhancement activities*: A TEA 21 funding category. Ten percent of STP monies must be set aside for projects that enhance the compatibility of transportation facilities with their surroundings. Examples of TE projects include bicycle and pedestrian paths, restoration of rail depots or other historic transportation facilities, acquisition of scenic or open space lands next to travel corridors, and murals or other public art projects.

TEA 21 *Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century*: Passed by Congress in May 1998, this federal transportation legislation retains and expands many of the programs created in 1991 under ISTEA. Reauthorizes federal surface transportation programs for six years (1998-2003), and significantly increases overall funding for transportation.

TIP *Transportation Improvement Program*: This is the primary spending plan for federal funding expected to flow to the region from all sources for transportation projects of all types. MTC prepares the TIP every two years with the assistance of local governments, transit operators and Caltrans. It covers at least a three-year period.

TLC *Transportation for Livable Communities*: Funding program created by MTC in 1998 to fund small-scale, community- and transit-oriented projects that improve neighborhood vitality.

TPLUS *Transportation Planning Land Use Strategies*: Examination of linkages between transportation and land use. The goal is to develop consensus on a set of Transit Oriented Development “Best Practices” and TLC/HIP program implementation

TOD *Transit Oriented Development*: Development characterized by a layout that encourages use of public transit service and walking or bicycling instead of automobile use for many trip uses. Typically it places higher density development within an easy walking distance of a public transit station or stop and ideally is mixed use. It is compact, pedestrian friendly and has a transit stop or station as an activity center.

U.S. DOT *United States Department of Transportation*: The federal cabinet-level agency with responsibility for highways, mass transit, aviation and ports; headed by the secretary of transportation. The DOT includes the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration, among others. There are also state DOTs (known as Caltrans in California).

VMT *Vehicle Miles Traveled*: The more cars there are on the road at the same time in the same area, the worse congestion will be. This term helps pin down the numbers. Reducing the growth of VMT can help ease traffic congestion and improve air quality.