

# ABAG Report to MCCMC<sup>1</sup>

October 2024

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** This report includes a synopsis of status of an evaluation conducted by ‘Informing Change’ on the success and challenges of the assistance provided to Cities and Counties by ABAG on the 6<sup>th</sup> cycle of the Region’s Housing Elements; ABAG and BayREN approved a contract for \$22M to support a Single-Family Energy Savings Program; MTC/ABAG approved an amendment to Plan Bay Area 2050 that includes the Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit (SMART) passenger rail service extension to Healdsburg; and report on the additional blueprint refinements proposed for Plan Bay Area 2050+.

## **SUCCESSSES AND CHALLENGES ON TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS PROVIDED TO CITIES AND COUNTIES**

**IN DEVELOPING THEIR HOUSING ELEMENTS:** In 2020, ABAG established the Regional Housing Technical Assistance (RHTA) Program with \$23.9 million from the REAP 1.0 grant from the CA Department of Housing and Community Development. The program was developed to support the 109 Bay Area jurisdictions with the development of their **6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Housing Elements** and has continued to provide housing policy guidance through technical assistance tools, trainings, and opportunities to convene local planners. REAP 1.0-funded activities ended in December 2023 with final administrative wrap-up occurring from January 2024 through June 2024. This report was provided at the ABAG Housing Committee on October 9<sup>th</sup> and at the ABAG Executive Board meeting on October 17, 2024.

In January 2024, ABAG selected a consultant, ‘Informing Change’, to conduct an impartial evaluation of the RHTA program’s activities. Informing Change reviewed background documentation, including staff reports and program design materials; conducted 21 interviews with local planning staff in all nine counties; held three focus groups with ABAG/MTC staff involved with various aspects of program design and delivery; held two focus groups with consultant teams leading the seven County Planning Collaboratives; and administered a regionwide survey that was completed by 72 unique individuals representing 62 total jurisdictions.

Their findings included the following successes:

## **Technical Assistance Use & Usefulness**

- **Data packets and County Planning Collaboratives** were ranked as the most useful TA products.
- **Tools and templates that were pre-approved by HCD** were highly appreciated by local planning staff.
- Local staff reported that RHTA tools **helped them complete their work (87%), were easy to use (84%)** and helped them **develop their Housing Elements (79%)**.
- **Wide-reaching audiences** for technical assistance products throughout the state and country.
- The first 25 webinars had an **average of 123 registrants** per session and **1,700+ views**.
- As of September 1, 2024, **88 jurisdictions in substantial compliance** with state law.

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<sup>1</sup> Marin County Council of Mayors and Councilmembers (MCCMC). For questions, please contact Councilmember Pat Eklund at: 415-336-9913 (cell).

Their findings highlighted the following challenges with the program that will be addressed in the future:

## Technical Assistance Challenges

- The **timing of technical assistance tools** could have been improved to benefit local staff timelines.
- **RHTA communication on technical assistance tool availability** could have been clearer to local staff.
- The **Housing Element Site Selection (HESS) tool** was difficult to use.
- The **RHTA website is difficult to navigate**.
- **Grant administration** could be more straightforward for both local and MTC/ABAG staff.

### **ABAG AND BayREN APPROVED \$22M CONTRACT TO SUPPORT SINGLE-FAMILY ENERGY SAVINGS PROGRAM:**

ABAG and the Bay Area Regional Energy Network (BayREN) approved the final contract with Franklin Energy for \$22,100,000, of which over \$18,000,000 **will be earmarked for customer incentives** to support the Single-Family Energy Savings Program that includes special consideration for moderate-income residents through December 31, 2027.

BayREN is a coalition of the [Bay Area's nine counties](#) — a network of local governments partnering to promote resource efficiency at the regional level, focusing on energy, water and greenhouse gas reduction. BayREN offers rebates, funding and technical assistance to help residents, property owners, business owners and local governments improve the resource-efficiency and carbon footprint of their buildings.

Since 2013, BayREN has implemented a portfolio of energy efficiency programs across the region. ABAG serves as the program administrator and lead agency for a 10-member unincorporated association of local government entities. The California Public Utilities Commission, first authorized funding for BayREN and on July 3, 2023 issued a decision (D.23-06-055) which, among other things, approved BayREN's strategic business plan for eight years (2024-2031) and four-year program portfolio for 2024-2027, with an accompanying budget of approximately \$157 million.

In 2022, BayREN initiated a redesign process for the single-family program to better achieve the goals of health, comfort, safety, and savings through energy upgrades for moderate-income residents. BayREN's Home+ program will sunset to introduce the new Efficiency and Sustainable Energy (EASE) Home program, which will offer moderate-income customers low-cost upgrades and expert guidance to simplify the process of improving home performance. The program will issue over \$18 million in energy efficiency and electrification incentives over the course of the contract. ABAG, on behalf of BayREN, has contracts with member agencies and with third-party consultants to assist in the implementation of the programs. ABAG issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to 5,444 firms on August 1, 2024 for the new single-family program design and implementation. The RFP was downloaded 59 times, and ABAG received three proposals by the deadline. After an evaluation and interviews, Franklin Energy was selected and the contract approved by ABAG for this work will be awarded \$22,100,000, of which over \$18,000,000 will be earmarked for customer incentives.

### **MTC/ABAG APPROVED AN AMENDMENT TO PLAN BAY AREA 2050 THAT INCLUDES THE SONOMA-MARIN AREA RAIL TRANSIT (SMART) PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE EXTENSION TO HEALDSBURG**

In July 2024, MTC/ABAG staff presented a proposal to amend Plan Bay Area 2050 to include the next phase of the SMART rail extension, which would extend service from Windsor to Healdsburg in Sonoma County on the

condition that SMART would offset the costs of the extension by removing other Sonoma County projects of equivalent costs; and, that they provide the technical analyses to assess the amendment's impacts on regional traffic volumes, greenhouse gas emissions, and other mobile source emissions.

MTC/ABAG staff, in consultation with the Sonoma County Transportation Authority (SCTA) recommended offsetting the costs of the SMART extension by removing the planned improvements to US101/Railroad Avenue and the Farmers Lane Extension in Santa Rosa and submitted the analyses that confirms the amendment will have minimal impact on regional traffic and will not affect the region's ability to meet greenhouse gas reduction targets or achieve a positive air quality conformity determination.

In October 2024, MTC and ABAG approved staff recommendation to approve the extension of the service with above mitigations since the Transportation-Air Quality Conformity Analysis and an EIR Addendum demonstrated that the proposed changes complied with the applicable federal and state requirements. On November 14, 2024, the ABAG Executive Board will take action on a proposed resolution that certifies:

- completion of an Addendum to the EIR with technical revisions to the FEIR and findings;
- that the Addendum satisfies all the requirements of CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines; and
- that ABAG, as a decision-making body, certifies that the Addendum (Attachment A) was presented to them, and that they have reviewed and considered the ASSOCIATION OF BAY AREA GOVERNMENTS RESOLUTION NO. 09-2024 -4- information contained within the Addendum prior to approving the Amendment to the Plan.

**ADDITIONAL BLUEPRINT REFINEMENTS PROPOSED TO PLAN BAY AREA 2050+:** In October 2024, staff presented changes to the 35 blueprint strategies for the Plan Bay Area 2050+ that reflected the post-pandemic changes; and, the insights gathered from recent public engagement and findings from the draft blueprint analysis which includes the following:

- Transportation strategy refinements focused on integrating Transit 2050+ recommendations; refining non-transit strategies to align with fiscal and climate realities; and further optimizing the plan's pricing approach;
- Housing strategy refinements focused on scaling up innovative approaches to affordable housing design, construction, and project financing to reduce projected affordable housing development costs, as well as expanding housing opportunities;
- Economy strategy refinements focused on better aligning the location of future jobs with the region's existing and planned transit network; and
- Environment strategy refinements focusing on supporting accessibility enhancements to homes and parks, as well as greater investments in urban parks and sea level rise adaptation.

Staff will return to the ABAG Executive Board in November 2024 to provide a more detailed update on the outreach efforts, as well as proposed refinements to the Final Blueprint strategies and assumptions. It is anticipated that the Board may be considering approval of the Final Blueprint strategies in December 2024.

## **UPCOMING MEETINGS<sup>2</sup>**

- **November 8, 2024 – ABAG Administrative Committee, 9:40am; ABAG Legislative Committee 9:45am**
- **November 14, 2024 – ABAG Housing Committee, 12:00pm**
- **November 14, 2024 – ABAG Finance Comm., 5:00pm; ACFA Governing Bd 5:05pm; ABAG Executive Bd, 5:10pm**
- **November 14, 2024 – Bay Area Regional Collaborative, 10:00am**
- **November 21, 2024 – SF Bay Trail Steering Committee, 1:00pm**

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<sup>2</sup> All meetings are 'hybrid' which means that some Board/Committee members will be in person at 375 Beale Street, SF; and, others will be participating via Zoom, webcast and/or teleconference, as noted otherwise. <https://mtc.legistar.com/> If you have questions, contact Pat Eklund, Councilmember, City of Novato at 415-336-9913 or via email at: [pateklund@comcast.net](mailto:pateklund@comcast.net).