

TAM RTP Hearing 10-11

I've got to start by saying: The CTC is broken. Their policies are at least 20 years out of date.

You have the authority to set a very new direction for transportation in this county. But you would never know it by reading the staff report. Judging by the report, this agenda item appears to be just another routine item.

The whole point of this agenda item last month had been to ask you what weight to give to each of the RTP candidate priority criteria. But that focus has been buried. It isn't at all clear what you are expected to do with this item. If you had been properly briefed by staff, you would recognize this item as the ultimate transportation policy setting discussion.

In my view, this is yet another in a long history of presentations shaped to maintain the status quo. TAM's predecessor agency had an ugly practice of keeping decision makers in the dark, so as to have staff positions rubber-stamped.

By framing the discussion in the complex and confusing manner as she did, your executive director has managed to overwhelm you. I think it is policy maker abuse. She presented your future options as being entirely constrained by entrenched rules, based on the assumption that the status quo is eternal. Let's lead the shift!

This is surprising to me, as I personally met with her and discussed exactly how an alternative policy direction might be presented. The fact that you are not seeing a discussion of alternatives speaks volumes.

The buried policy question before you is whether, in this age of climate change, you feel that TAM's long-standing focus on highway building is still appropriate. This RTP provides an opportunity to change direction. While MTC appears to still be stuck in the past as to the overall direction of the RTP, Marin could use its RTP submission to place a much greater focus on transit. This is the option that was withheld.

While clearly going against the state's flow, which is all about building highways, I believe there are feasible ways to convert highway funding into the holy grail: transit operations funding. What's needed is the political will to direct staff to attempt to swap funds for sales tax funds from other counties.

My purpose in bringing this to your attention is to assure you that you are not prisoners of the decisions of the past. You can change direction if you believe there is a need.

My organization believes that sustainability in an era of peak oil means that we need a much more transit-oriented future. To accomplish that, it will be necessary to provide much more transit service in order to make it reasonably convenient. If there were 15 minute service on highway 101 and between Fairfax and San Rafael, we believe transit could be a feasible alternative to the personal car.

If TAM wants to reduce GHGs, the last thing you should be doing is building more highway lanes. And yet, that is just what the RTP submission does. If you want a different result, you need to change where you put your money. If you are interested, I would be happy to help staff plan that transition.