

Transportation Solutions Defense and Education Fund

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Testimony to MTC on Consolidation--October 28, 2015

Some public interest groups have mistaken this proposed action for good governance. That is a naive and ill-informed view. Of course, integrated planning would be a good thing. But this is not integration. This is the most naked power grab the region has seen in a generation.

MTC's seeming openness to merger must be placed in context. A generation ago, the Bay Vision 2020 process had a great plan for the merger of regional agencies. MTC single-handedly torpedoed it. Later, the Legislature placed the overall governance of the RTP process in the hands of the Joint Policy Committee. MTC systematically bullied the JPC into giving up its oversight function and receding into obscurity. This is not an agency that works collaboratively.

MTC's proposed merger process is a merger at gunpoint. It actually would be a negotiation over the terms of ABAG's surrender. The fact that MTC proposes to select the consultant tells you who intends to control the process.

MTC bears the unmistakable imprint of Robert Moses. Clearly, it aspires to be the Robert Moses of the West. Years later, however, we know that Robert Moses was a disaster for democracy and the powerless. MTC must not be allowed to seize more power.

This is all about relationships. MTC needs to conduct itself on the basis of respect for other agencies. Notice how the presentation is entirely silent on relations with the cities and counties of the region as to how it would conduct land use planning. That tells you everything you might want to know about this proposal.

Let's be clear: This is about relationships. And ABAG is just not that into you, MTC.

Lastly, why would the region willingly hand over control of regional planning to MTC? Is it the demonstrated competence of managing the Bay Bridge construction? Is it because the Headquarters Building has been such a great deal for the region? Is it because it has done such a great job managing transit expansion? Regional transit ridership is now lower than it was thirty years ago. And due to population growth, per capita transit ridership is substantially lower than thirty years ago. With congestion far worse now, MTC's competence in transportation planning is entirely unproven. Why would any informed person want MTC to also control land use planning?