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August 24, 2009

Christopher Calfee, Special Counsel
ATTN: CEQA Guidelines
California Resources Agency
1017 L Street, #2223
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: CEQA Guidelines Amendments

Dear Mr. Calfee:

MTC is grateful for the opportunity to comment on the proposed draft CEQA guidelines. MTC is the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area's transportation planning, coordinating and financing agency.

MTC staff supports many of the changes proposed by the OPR in the Preliminary Draft CEQA Guidelines Amendments. However, the amendments proposed by OPR in Appendix G- Section XVI Transportation and Traffic, do not contain sufficient questions on the impacts to bicycle, pedestrian and transit operations and safety.

The current level of service (LOS) requirements gives preference to preserving road capacity for motor vehicles. This preservation of LOS levels routinely impedes bicycle, pedestrian and transit projects that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). MTC has committed over $3 billion in bicycle, pedestrian and Transit Oriented Development (TOD) projects over the next 30 years and delivery of these projects is greatly impeded by focusing solely on the need to maintain an automobile LOS standard. The consequences of the LOS requirement are summarized below:

- Vehicle trips rates are assumed to be the same across all developments – Planners are required to use the same ITE Trip Generation rates for estimating trips within mixed use development where trips are taken by transit, walking or bicycling and are quite different than auto-dependent development.
- The LOS standard only considers local congestion – Congestion impacts are only considered in the local area of the project. The regional impacts of increased vehicle use are not taken into account.
- Impacts to transit users and bicycles and pedestrians not considered – Projects that include bicycle lanes that reduces vehicle capacity are assumed to have negative impacts for vehicles but do not consider the benefits of a mode shift to an alternative form of transportation.

MTC encourages the California Natural Resources Agency to make the following revisions to the April 13, 2009 draft CEQA guidelines amendments:

1. Restore the January 8, 2009 amendments to Appendix G, sections XVI (a) and (b) which used roadway volume or vehicles miles traveled as a measure of the project's incremental contribution to transportation impacts and eliminated the LOS standard.

2. We are supportive of the removal of the consideration of parking capacity. Studies have demonstrated that mandated excessive parking results in underpriced parking which in turn results in excessive rates of driving which contribute to increased emissions.

3. Add the following to assess if a project has resulted in a degradation of facilities or safety for bicycles and pedestrians:

   g) Reduce, sever, impede or eliminate pedestrian and/or bicycle circulation and access, or cause secondary impacts on pedestrians and bicyclists through its traffic mitigation measures, such as from widening intersections to accommodate more motorized vehicles

4. Change the proposed language in Appendix G, section XVI (f) to read:

   Conflict with adopted policies, plans or programs of other transportation modes (e.g., transit, bicycling and walking)

Please consider incorporating these recommended changes in the CEQA Guidelines Amendments. Please feel free to contact Sean Co (sco@mtc.ca.gov) of my staff should have further questions.

Sincerely,

Doug Kimsey
Director, Planning

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