

January 10, 2011

Steve Kinsey, Chair
TAM
750 Lindero Street Suite 200
San Rafael CA 94901



Subject: TAM Agenda Item 9, January 10, 2011

Dear Steve:

The purpose of Marin Conservation League's letter is to support TAM's draft letter of January 27, 2011 to MTC and ABAG, which recommends that a new funding program called the "Resource and Farmland Preservation Transportation Incentive Fund" be established and that "credit" be considered in the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) for agricultural preservation and local food production. In supporting the basic purpose of the letter, we wish also to point out a few issues that might be raised in Marin County if a fund as proposed were implemented and to request that there be a full participatory process for local education.

As pointed out in staff's report to TAM Executive Committee, Marin County is substantially an agricultural county that provides benefits that are unique within a metropolitan area. The Marin Conservation League has recognized for many decades the tremendous value of the farmlands of West Marin and has contributed toward their preservation as agricultural land. These benefits include not only local food production but also carbon sequestration and energy production from dairy waste. The basic premise of the Resource and Farmland Preservation Transportation Incentive Fund would be to provide an incentive to jurisdictions such as Marin County to preserve resource areas and farmland and to foster farm-to-market and community-interconnection routes. Eligible projects for funding could include local street or county road improvements, or other transportation or emission reduction projects

To receive funding, jurisdictions also would need to demonstrate that they are directing growth to urbanized areas. It is apparent that the rural setting of West Marin is consistent with the goals of farmland preservation. As your letter points out, even limited growth in this context could generate substantial VMT because of travel distances to urban centers. Therefore, both transportation investments and Regional Housing Needs Allocations should reflect the particular conditions needed to preserve rural agriculture.

MCL appreciates TAM's effort to bring this matter to the attention of these regional agencies. The overall goal is to reduce green house gas emissions through reducing VMT. Your closing paragraph, paraphrased above, points out the need to clarify how incentives will be defined and implemented to achieve this goal. There must be a definition of specific objectives that would guide how the incentives would be allocated.

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Implementation of a "Resource and Farmland Preservation Transportation Incentive Fund" does raise a number of questions, among them the following:

- Would improvements such as road widening reduce VMT?
- To what extent would improved public transportation reduce VMT?
- Will providing incentives for the production of energy from emissions from dairy waste be cost effective?
- What kinds of projects are envisioned relating to "farm to market" and "interconnectivity"?

The legislation specifies that at least two meeting be held in each county for the purpose of educating city councils and supervisors within the county. Because SB 375 is a new concept in land use planning, it is important that frequent meetings be held so that input can be received from the public. It is essential to get input from persons living and/or working in West Marin. We hope you will open the public process to include all stakeholders.

Again, thank you for getting the Resource and Farmland Preservation issue on the regional planning table.

Sincerely,



Nona Dennis, President

Cc: EAC