Metropolitan Transportation Commission and Association of Bay Area Governments

Joint MTC Planning Committee with the ABAG Administrative Committee

June 12, 2026 **Agenda Item 9b - 26-0588**

Equity Priority Communities (EPC) Refresh Phase One Evaluation Kickoff

Subject:

Overview of the EPC Refresh Phase One Evaluation – a collaborative project that will reimagine MTC-ABAG's existing EPC framework to more effectively guide equitable regional planning – including the project purpose, goals, timeline, milestones, and stakeholder engagement.

Background:

Since 1998, MTC has used U.S. Census Bureau data to measure equity across the Bay Area. In 2009, the term *Communities of Concern (CoCs)* was introduced to identify areas with high concentrations of minority and low-income residents. For Plan Bay Area (2013), the definition expanded to include additional factors such as limited English proficiency, zero vehicle households, seniors over 75, people with disabilities, single-parent households, and cost-burdened renters—reflecting a more multidimensional understanding of equity.

The CoC framework was updated in 2016 (as part of Plan Bay Area 2040) with adjusted thresholds to reflect demographic changes, and in May 2021, MTC-ABAG formally renamed CoCs *Equity Priority Communities (EPCs)*. During Plan Bay Area 2050 and Plan Bay Area 2050+, the need for a comprehensive reassessment to address methodological limitations was formally incorporated into the Implementation Plan (most recently, as Implementation Action #63), reflecting concerns raised by equity stakeholders, county transportation agencies, local jurisdictions and the MTC Policy Advisory Council. Due to staffing and resource constraints, a full framework update was not pursued, but funding has now been secured from the Senate Bill 1 planning grants to advance this important project.

Why Refresh the EPC Framework:

The EPC Refresh is intended to strengthen the framework's ability to support equitable, consistent, and data-driven planning and funding decisions, while continuing to support federal and state requirements. While the current framework has provided a strong foundation, it may not fully reflect changing regional conditions or evolving equity priorities. As a result, even with updated demographic data, the framework may continue to produce incomplete or inconsistent

insights due to limitations in its indicators, thresholds and overall approach. The EPC Refresh effort seeks to:

- Address structural limitations in how the current framework defines and prioritizes communities (e.g., indicator selection, threshold definitions and binary classification approach).
- Ensure the framework reflects current regional conditions and trends.
- Strengthen EPCs as a trusted prioritization tool for internal and external partners.
- Support informed decision-making for Plan Bay Area and other initiatives focused on advancing equity outcomes.

Timeline and Phased Path Forward:

The EPC Refresh effort is planned to be completed in two phases. Phase One is intentionally centered on listening and learning, focusing on evaluating the current EPC tool, understanding how it is being used by stakeholders, and identifying opportunities for improvement. Phase One commenced in spring 2026 and will conclude in mid-2027. Contingent on the needs and opportunities identified in Phase One, Phase Two will seek to undertake the necessary development work to create an updated EPC tool and is anticipated to be a multi-year effort.

Project Approach:

MTC-ABAG staff, with support from a consultant team, will engage regional stakeholders, assess needs and establish the strategic and analytical foundation for updating the EPC Framework. This effort begins with a comprehensive needs assessment, including engagement with staff across MTC-ABAG sections and a broad range of external partners — such as state and regional partners; county and city agencies, including transit agencies and DOTs; community-based and equity-focused organizations; labor groups; academia; and Tribal partners— through interviews, small group discussions and surveys. Input from these activities will be synthesized to identify shared priorities, key concerns and equity considerations. The proposed list of external stakeholders to engage can be found in **Attachment B**.

Building on these findings, staff will define a clear vision and set of goals for an updated EPC framework, explore available data and analytical tools, and identify relevant best practices. Staff will also develop and evaluate preliminary framework approaches, considering feasibility,

alignment with regional needs and effectiveness in advancing project goals. Throughout the process, findings and materials will be presented in clear, accessible formats to support decision-making and partner coordination.

Next Steps:

Staff are currently preparing a request for proposals to procure a consultant that will support engagement, data exploration, and conceptual framework development. External partner listening sessions are anticipated to begin this summer, with staff planning to return to the Committee with key findings in fall 2026.

Recommendation:

Information

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Presentation
- Attachment B: Proposed Stakeholder List

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