Equity Priority Communities (EPC) Refresh
Phase One Evaluation

Planning Committee

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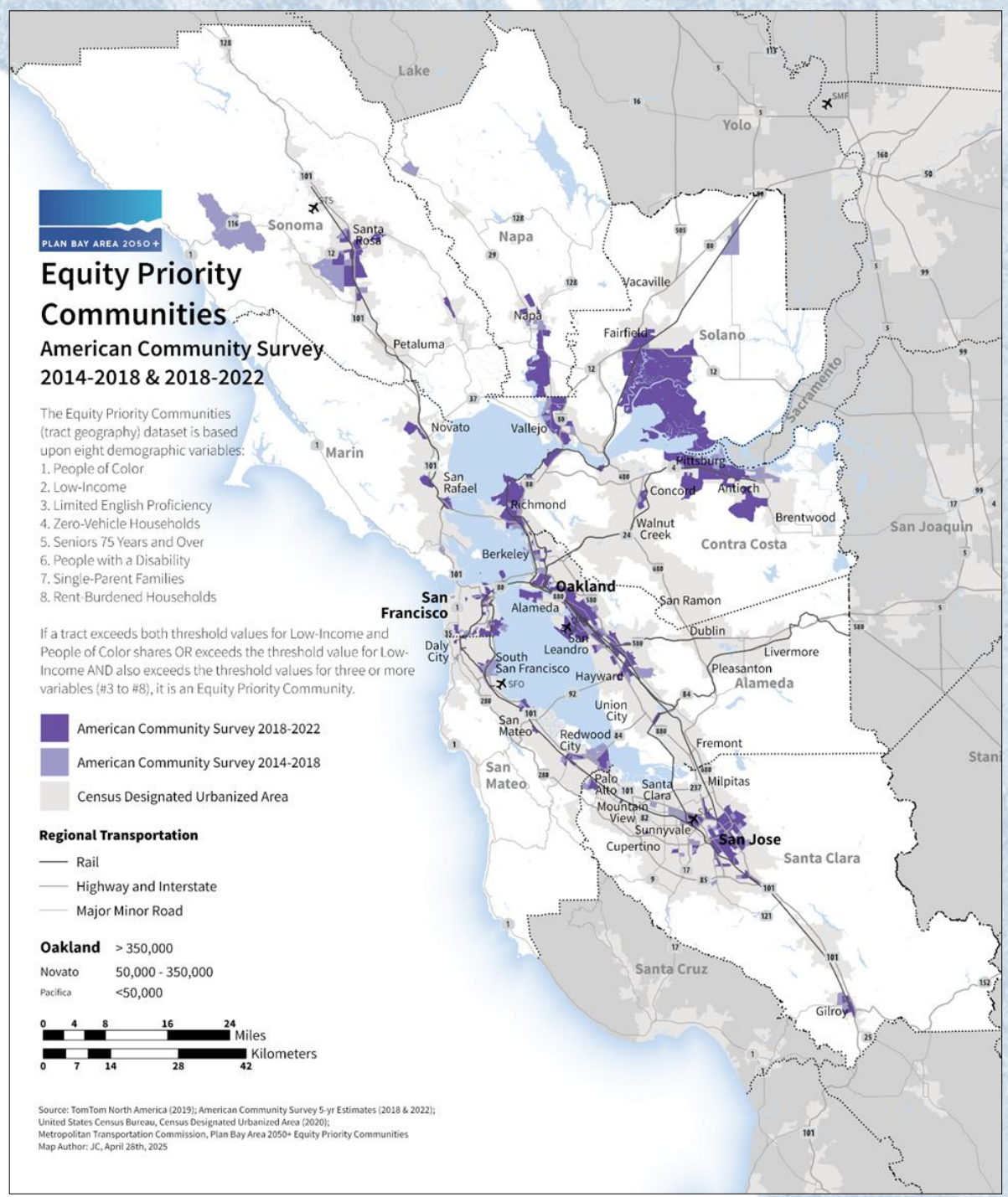
ASSOCIATION OF BAY AREA GOVERNMENTS
METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

What are Equity Priority Communities (EPCs)?

- EPCs are **place-based designations**, defined at the census tract level, developed by MTC to identify socially and economically disadvantaged populations.
- EPCs were previously known as Communities of Concern (CoCs) prior to 2021.
- EPCs are **updated every four years** using the latest American Community Survey Data.
- The methodology that identifies EPCs was **last revised in 2016**.

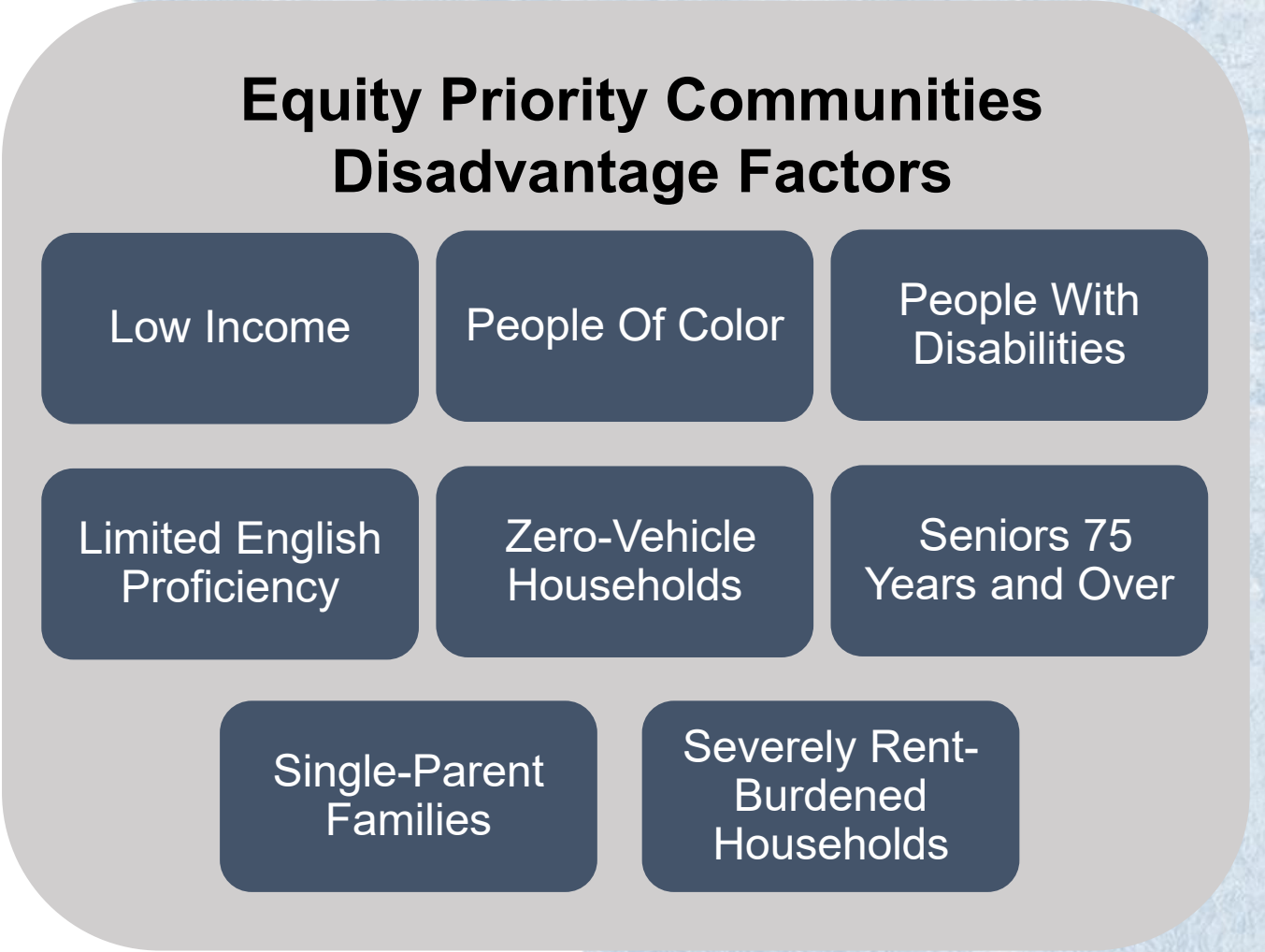


Equity Priority Communities continue to experience disparities across MTC-ABAG's core work areas.

Photos: MTC/ABAG Photo Catalog, KQED, San Francisco Chronicle

How are EPCs Defined?

- EPCs are census tracts that have a significant concentration of "**disadvantage factors**".
- "**Thresholds**" are created to determine statistically significant concentrations for each factor that are above the regional average.
- How does a tract qualify to be an EPC?
  1. Meets thresholds for <u>both</u> people of color and low-income households, OR
  2. Meets thresholds for <u>both</u> low-income households and three of any of the remaining six factors



MTC-ABAG Programs that Incorporate EPCs

Planning

- Plan Bay Area 2050+ Engagement
- Plan Bay Area 2050+ Strategies
- Bay Trail Equity Strategy
- Community Based Transportation Plans
- Active Transportation Plan

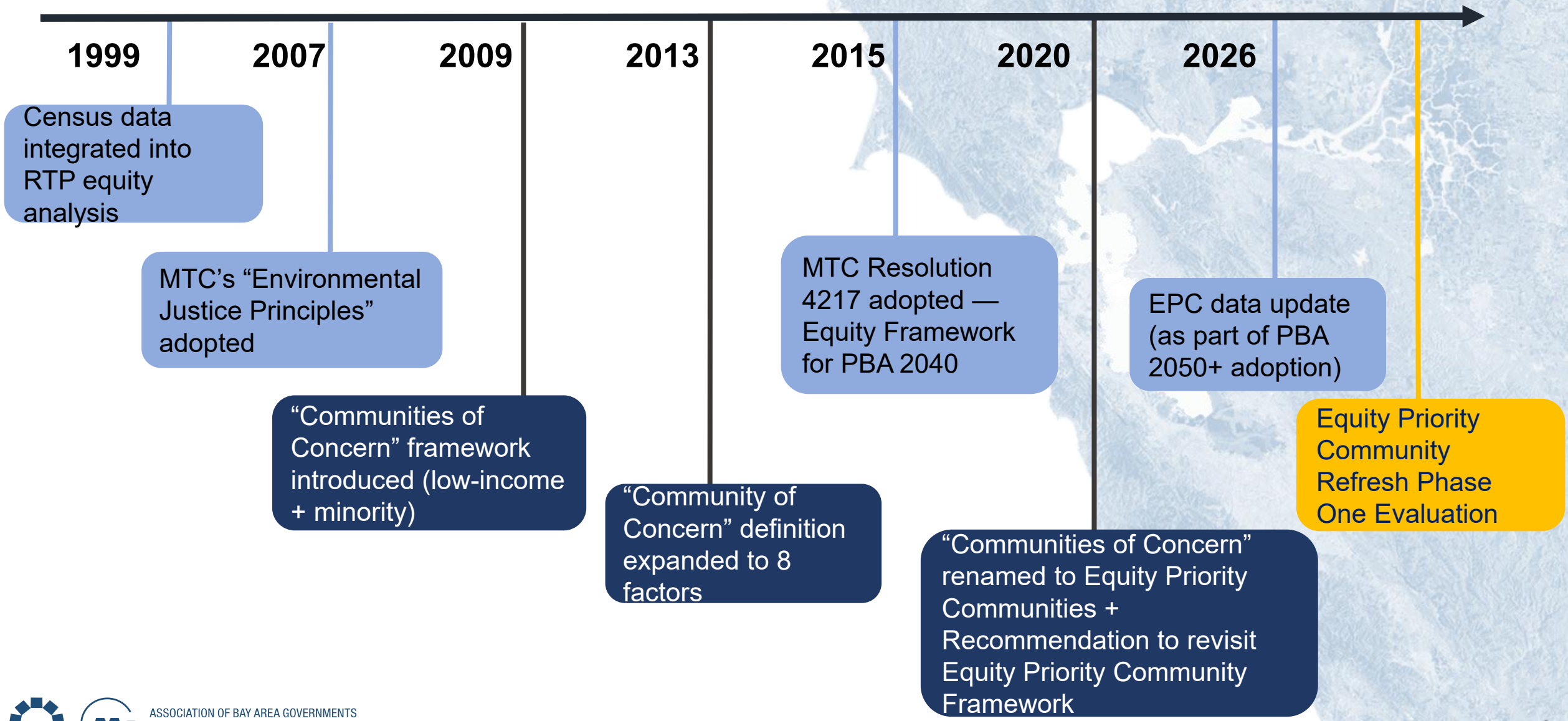
Funding

- One Bay Area Grant Program
- Active Transportation Program
- Community Action Resource and Empowerment (CARE) Program
- Priority Conservation Area (PCA) Grants

Implementation

- Bay Wheels Dock Locations
- Clipper Retail Locations
- FasTrak Equity Assessment
- Transit Station Public Charging Program
- Bay Area Housing Finance Authority Equity Framework

Evolution of EPCs at MTC-ABAG



Why Update the EPC Framework Now?

Over time, the EPC framework has been shaped by evolving federal, state, local, and agency-level policies. At the same time, the Bay Area's shifting demographics—along with the impacts of the post-pandemic landscape—have introduced new challenges and considerations.

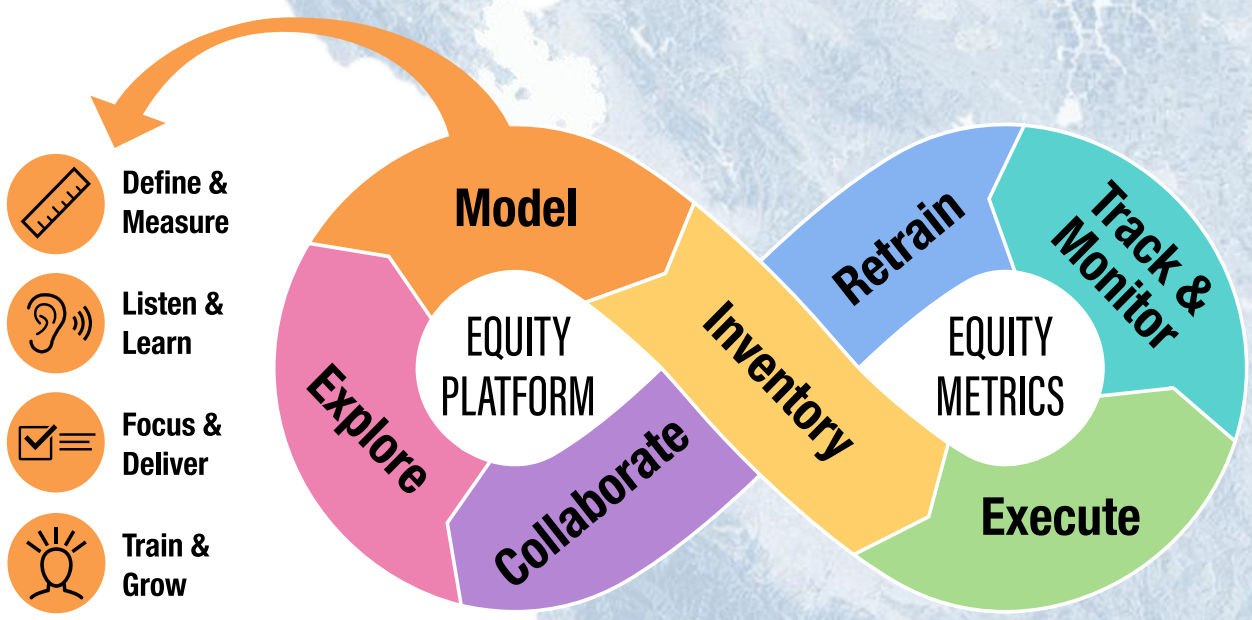
Key questions raised through stakeholder feedback over the past few years include:

- How can the EPC tool provide clearer definitions of displacement and gentrification impacts?
- In what ways can the EPC tool better represent people with disabilities?
- How can the EPC tool update low-income thresholds to more accurately reflect the Bay Area's high cost of living?
- Should the EPC tool expand beyond a strictly place-based framework, and if so, how?
- How can alternative data sources be integrated into the EPC tool to improve its effectiveness?
- How can the EPC tool better address the needs of youth and students?

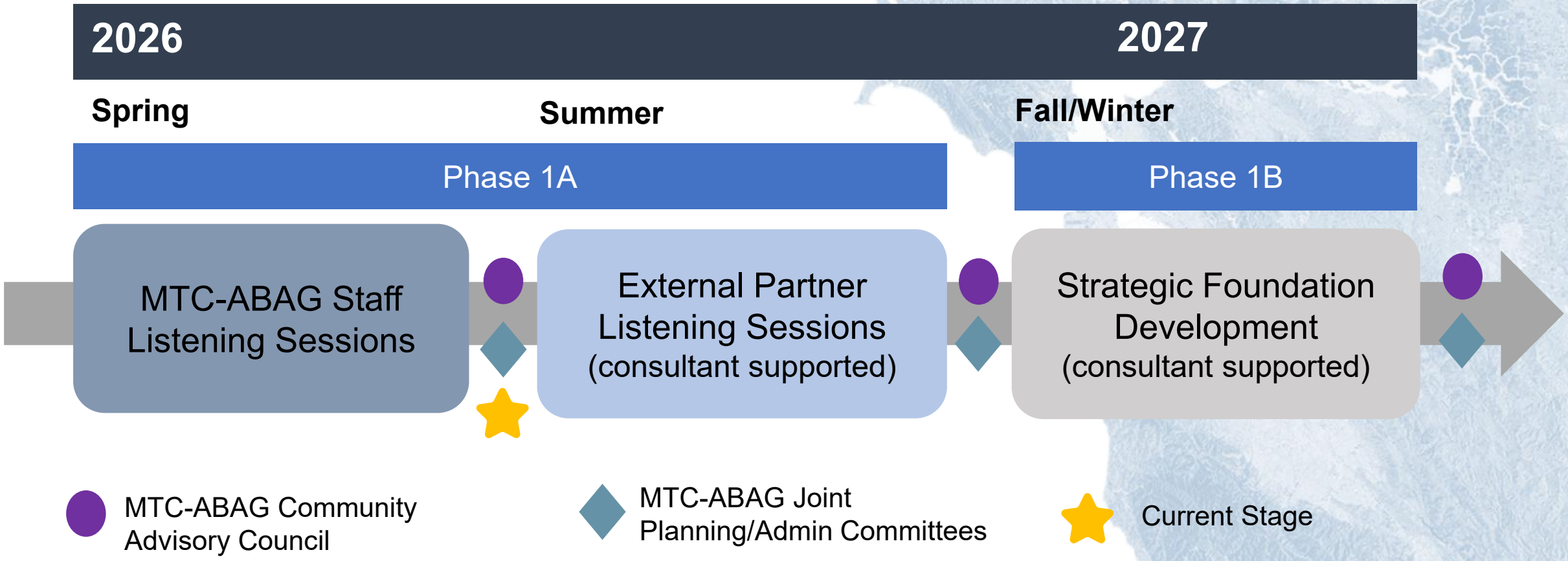
Goals of the EPC Refresh

- Address limitations in how the current framework defines and prioritizes communities (e.g., updated MTC-ABAG policy, fixed thresholds, limited indicators, binary classifications)
- Ensure the framework reflects current regional conditions and trends, not just updated data over time
- Strengthen EPCs as a trusted prioritization tool for internal and external partners
- Support more informed decision-making for Plan Bay Area and other initiatives focused on advancing equity outcomes

MTC-ABAG Equity Platform



EPC Refresh Phase 1*: Proposed Timeline



**Phase 1 is the first of two planned phases. Contingent on the opportunities identified in Phase 1, Phase 2 will seek to focus on technical methodology and tool development, turning the conceptual framework into a final, usable product.*

EPC Refresh Phase 1: Engagement Approach

We will use a mix of in-person and online strategies to ensure inclusive and accessible participation:

- Small group discussions
- One-on-one meetings
- Surveys

Who We Want to Engage

- Government & Public Agencies (State, Tribal Partners, Regional Agencies, Counties, Cities, Transit Agencies)
- Business and Labor Organizations
- Community & Advocacy Organizations
- Academia

*Refer to **Attachment B** for more expansive list of potential stakeholders.*

Photo: Karl Nielsen

Next Steps

- **In development:** RFP/procure consultant support
- **Summer 2026:** external listening sessions begin
- **Fall 2026:** return to committee with key findings

Discussion Questions

Opportunities to Refresh the EPC Framework:

- What should staff consider when refreshing the EPC framework, including gaps in how it prioritizes populations and relevant regional trends?

Engagement Approach:

- Do the proposed stakeholders and mix of engagement activities seem appropriate and sufficient? Are there organizations or community groups we should add to the stakeholder list?