

Metropolitan Transportation Commission  
Planning Committee  
101 8<sup>th</sup> Street  
Oakland, CA 94607



*Via email; hard copy to follow*

May 7, 2012

***Re: OneBayArea Conservation Grant program***

Dear Planning Committee:

The Marin Conservation League has been actively engaged in protecting and preserving Marin's natural assets for over 75 years. MCL has long been an advocate in favor of preserving parks and open space in the county. It is fair to say that MCL's efforts have substantially contributed to making Marin an outstanding place to live and that we have played a key role in creating the abundance of parks and open space lands in Marin that serve as an important resource for the entire Bay Area and draw visitors from around the world. We remain active in these matters because there is more work to be done.

For the past several years, MCL has been following the efforts of MTC and ABAG towards establishing Priority Conservation Areas in Marin and throughout the Bay Area, as part of their efforts, under FOCUS, "to create complete, livable communities ... that will, in turn, help achieve a more efficient, equitable and environmentally sustainable region." FOCUS' prior statement, that, "PCA's and PDA's are inextricably linked," should serve as a reminder that planning for growth requires planning for conservation. The designation of PCA's is, however, only the first step; acquisition funding is critical to their realization.

Accordingly, MCL supports the OneBayArea conservation grant program that is scheduled for a hearing by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission Planning Committee. Specifically, we support the MTC staff recommendations for conservation grants, dated April 4, 2012, except as noted below. We view the "North Bay Priority Conservation Areas Pilot Program," as a modest first step and would prefer that even more funds be designated for conservation grants.

It has come to our attention that the current language of the staff proposal includes vague language that was designed to allow some of the conservation grant money to be used for road construction and/or maintenance. MCL strongly opposes any diversion of funds designated for conservation grants to road construction/maintenance or other non-conservation uses. The OneBayArea Grant program, as described in the April 4 memo, contemplates "Cycle 2 Program" grants totaling \$790M over four years. Less than 1% of this amount (\$5M) would be used for conservation grants. There is no need to divert any of the relatively small amount of funding for conservation to other uses; any grant funds used for roads should come out of the remaining 99%. Accordingly, we urge you to expressly prohibit the use of conservation grant funds under the OneBayArea Grant program for roads

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or other non-conservation uses. You should either eliminate any vague language that would allow this, or make it clear that such language should not be interpreted to include roads.

Since this conservation grant program is just getting off the ground, we believe that it is critical for MTC to clearly articulate and then enforce the goals of the program so that the limited funds being made available now and in the future are not diverted to other uses. Conservation grants should be used solely to achieve conservation goals.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Susan Stompe". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S'.

Susan Stompe  
President