

Contra Costa Transportation Authority STAFF REPORT

Meeting Date: April 6, 2016

Subject	Development of a Potential Transportation Expenditure Plan (TEP) – Consideration to Adopt a Policy to Include an Advance Mitigation Program in the Draft TEP
Summary of Issues	<p>Authority staff has been participating on a Technical Advisory Committee in an effort to assess the potential for a Regional Advance Mitigation Program (RAMP) in the Bay Area. The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the Coastal Conservancy are sponsoring an effort to scope and implement a RAMP in the Bay Area with the target of including RAMP in MTC’s update of Plan Bay Area 2040. The effort, being facilitated by The Nature Conservancy, includes the MTC, several Congestion Management Agencies, regulatory and permitting agencies, and the Coastal Conservancy working together over the past 15 months to develop the tools and mechanisms, as well as the science-based conservation and mitigation framework to enable RAMP in the Bay Area. RAMP provides an opportunity to align conservation and infrastructure planning in the Bay Area to meet both conservation and economic development goals and provide a model for other regions in California and beyond. Contra Costa and Alameda County has been identified as one of two potential areas to pilot the RAMP approach. However, there are many issues to address, such as structure, funding, regulatory support, management, and coordination and support of existing conservation plans - like Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) and Natural Communities Conservation Plans (NCCPs) in the Bay Area.</p>
Recommendations	<p>Staff recommends the Authority develop and adopt a policy to include advance mitigation in the Draft TEP.</p>
Financial Implications	<p>The advance mitigation program carries a to-be-determined administrative cost. The Authority's cost for administration will depend on the model developed under the proposed Contra Costa/Alameda County pilot. The mitigation fees to fund the advance mitigation program should equal or approximate the project mitigation costs under a traditional project-by-project mitigation approach. An advance mitigation approach should include</p>

Options	<p>unknown savings and efficiencies as a result of streamlined project delivery.</p> <p>The Authority Board may decide to not adopt an advance mitigation policy and continue to mitigate project impacts on a project-by-project approach.</p>
Attachments	<p>A. Regional Advance Mitigation Planning in the San Francisco Bay Area - Effort to implement RAMP in the Bay Area for Environmental and Infrastructure Benefits</p> <p>B. MTC Fact Sheet - RAMP: Regional Advance Mitigation Planning A Win-Win for Transportation and Environment</p> <p>C. RAMP Timeline - February 2016</p>
Changes from Committee	N/A

Authority staff has been participating on a Technical Advisory Committee in an effort to assess the potential for a RAMP in the Bay Area. The MTC and the Coastal Conservancy are sponsoring an effort to scope and implement a RAMP in the Bay Area with the target of including RAMP in MTC’s update of Plan Bay Area 2040. The MTC being facilitated by The Nature Conservancy, several Congestion Management Agencies, regulatory agencies, and the Coastal Conservancy have been working together over the past 15 months to develop the tools and mechanisms, as well as the science-based conservation and mitigation framework to enable RAMP in the Bay Area. RAMP provides an opportunity to align conservation and infrastructure planning in the Bay Area to meet both conservation and economic development goals and provide a model for other regions in California and beyond. Contra Costa and Alameda County has been identified as one of two potential areas to pilot the RAMP approach. However, there are many issues to address, such as structure, funding, regulatory support, management, and coordination and support of existing conservation plans - like Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) and Natural Communities Conservation Plans (NCCPs) in the Bay Area. Staff recommends that the Authority consider adopting an advance mitigation policy for inclusion in the Draft TEP.

Staff will provide additional background material as well as the benefits and risks in adopting an advance mitigation program in a potential TEP for discussion and consideration by the Authority Board on April 6, 2016. Members of The Nature Conservancy and its consulting team may be able to attend and provide additional information at the Authority Board Special Meeting on April 20, 2016.

Regional Advance Mitigation Planning in the San Francisco Bay Area
Effort to implement RAMP in the Bay Area for Environmental and Infrastructure Benefits

Transportation agencies in the San Francisco Bay Area plan to implement over 680 transportation projects over the next 20 years—roads, bridges, transit, and rail lines to serve the growing population and thriving economy. As a global biodiversity hot spot, the Bay Area hosts an extraordinarily rich array of valuable natural communities and ecosystems that provide habitat for rare plants and wildlife, and support residents' health and quality of life by providing clean drinking water, clean air, opportunities for outdoor recreation, protection from disasters like flooding, landslides, and adaptation to climate change. As the Bay Area grows, it is important that it happens in a manner that protects and enhances the state's natural resources. Transportation and natural resource agencies are working together to develop an innovative way to advance needed infrastructure projects more efficiently and provide more effective conservation of our natural resources through *Regional Advance Mitigation Planning (RAMP)*. Plan Bay Area articulates this vision, with its balanced approach toward regional growth patterns and conservation of the region's parks, open spaces, farms, and ranches. RAMP is consistent with Plan Bay Area as it incorporates a regional and coordinated approach to infrastructure development and natural resources and working lands conservation, delivering benefits to both sectors.

An assessment conducted by researchers from U.C. Davis and The Nature Conservancy of the potential impact of the transportation projects in the approved Plan Bay Area identified 188 projects that may directly impact between 8,400 – 11,000 acres of the Bay Area's important species, habitat, farmlands and rangelands, rivers and streams. Many of those projects will have impacts that may result in increased fragmentation and degradation of existing habitats and species. Most transportation projects require environmental mitigation (avoidance, minimization, offset) as prescribed in each project's environmental document to reduce the potential impact as well as compensate for any impacts that do occur. These mitigation measures may include purchasing land or retaining land rights for certain affected species or activities. In the Bay Area, mitigation activities often occur on a per-project basis, with each project individually satisfying its own mitigation purchase requirements. This approach is often expensive, not integrated with a regional conservation vision, and done late in the project delivery cycle, thereby losing valuable conservation opportunities to conversion to other land uses.

RAMP aims to integrate conservation into infrastructure agencies' plans and project development well in advance and on a regional scale to reduce potential impacts of transportation projects, as well as to drive mitigation dollars to protect regional conservation priorities and protect important ecological functions that are at threat of loss. There are

significant benefits to transportation agencies – they can plan comprehensively for project delivery and reduce costs attributed to mitigation, achieve significant conservation benefits, and accelerate project delivery. Not only can RAMP reduce infrastructure project costs, expedite project delivery, and improve relationships among agencies, it also ensures mitigation funds are being put to their utmost and highest use by protecting land with high habitat and connectivity value to create larger scale, more functional ecosystems linked to the conservation priorities of the region. In this same way RAMP can also help reduce GHG emissions through land use changes and carbon sequestration and provide communities with watershed protection, cleaner air, and open space for recreation. RAMP itself is not a regulatory process and does not change CEQA in any way. However by planning strategically on a larger scale and implementing mitigation in advance of project impacts or project delivery, RAMP allows both resource agencies and CMAs to work together to implement mitigation and conservation to be more cost effective, efficient, and successful.

Other regions, such as Orange County and San Diego County, have programs for advance mitigation and are seeing the cost, project delivery, and environmental conservation benefits.

Opportunity

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) is sponsoring an effort to scope and implement RAMP in the Bay Area with the target of including RAMP in MTC's update of Plan Bay Area 2040. The MTC, Congestion Management Agencies, regulatory agencies, and the Coastal Conservancy are working together to develop the tools and mechanisms, as well as the science-based conservation and mitigation framework to enable RAMP in the Bay Area. There are many issues to address, such as structure, funding, regulatory support, management, and coordination and support of existing conservation plans—like Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) and Natural Communities Conservation Plans (NCCPs)—in the Bay Area.

This is an opportunity to align conservation and infrastructure planning in the Bay Area to meet both conservation and economic development goals and provide a model for other regions in California and beyond.



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F A C T S H E E T

RAMP: Regional Advance Mitigation Planning A Win-Win for Transportation and Environment

Integrated Conservation & Project Planning

RAMP is an innovative collaboration between transportation and resource agencies to advance new transportation projects more efficiently and to more effectively preserve the Bay Area's natural resources. This new approach spurns traditional project-by-project mitigation deals to incorporate regional-scale conservation planning into the earliest stages of transportation agencies' project planning and development.

Higher Efficiency, Lower Costs

Most transportation projects require environmental mitigation — avoidance, minimization or offsets such as buying land or retaining land rights for certain affected species or activities. Traditional project-by-project mitigation is frequently expensive, often occurs late in the delivery process, and may have no connection with regional conservation goals. RAMP helps transportation agencies cut costs, speed project delivery and achieve major conservation benefits by developing a comprehensive delivery plan that includes mitigation from the start.

No New Regs or CEQA Changes

RAMP is not a regulatory process, and does not change CEQA in any way. RAMP helps the transportation agencies get the biggest bang for their mitigation buck by protecting land with high habitat and connectivity value to create larger, more functional ecosystems linked to regional conservation priorities. RAMP helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions through land-use changes and carbon sequestration, and provides communities with watershed protection and open space for recreation.

Bay Area Eyes Statewide Model

MTC aims to use RAMP in the development of Plan Bay Area 2040, the long-range regional transportation and land-use plan slated for adoption in 2017. The Commission is collaborating with county congestion management agencies, state and federal regulatory agencies and the state Coastal Conservancy to develop the tools, mechanisms and science-based conservation and mitigation framework needed to implement RAMP in the Bay Area establish a model for use across the state and beyond. Orange County and San Diego County already are seeing cost, delivery and conservation benefits from advance mitigation programs.

Thousands of Acres at Stake

Researchers from U.C. Davis and the Nature Conservatory reviewed the nearly 700 projects included in the current Plan Bay Area and identified 188 projects that could directly affect up to 11,000 acres of the Bay Area's most important species habitats, farm and range lands, and rivers and streams. RAMP provides an opportunity to protect much of this land from fragmentation and habitat degradation.

Plenty of Work Still to be Done

Implementation of RAMP in the Bay Area remains a work in progress. Ongoing challenges include funding, organizational structure, management, regulatory support, and coordination with existing Habitat Conservation Plans and Natural Communities Conservation Plans. But the RAMP initiative is an important opportunity to align infrastructure and conservation planning to achieve mobility, economic development and environmental goals simultaneously.

11/2015

Timeline: A Snapshot

February 2016



Outreach and engagement

Work plan
Development
and Launch

Regional Assessment

Pilot projects

Mitigation framework and
program development

PBA 2040
Adoption