



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

R-19-165  
Meeting 19-30  
December 9, 2019

## AGENDA ITEM 4

### AGENDA ITEM

Board Exploratory Topics

### GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

Hold high level exploratory discussions regarding the following three topics of interest and provide feedback on desired next steps for each:

- Private Fundraising
- Board Training Opportunities
- Region-wide Issues Affecting the District's Mission

### SUMMARY

Throughout the fiscal year, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) Board of Directors (Board) have voiced an interest in discussing various topics that fall outside the projects and programs contained within the Board-approved Fiscal Year 2019-20 Capital Improvement and Action Plan (CIAP). The December 9 Strategic Planning Retreat is an opportunity for the Board to discuss these topics at a high, exploratory level and provide initial direction on next steps, including whether to add a related project or specific task to the upcoming FY2020-21 CIAP.

### DISCUSSION

As is common in other forms of local government, District Board members occasionally bring up topics of interest during Board meetings as they discuss various items on the agenda. In compliance with the Ralph M. Brown Act or open meetings law, these topics are set aside and properly included as agenda items for a later meeting. Since the start of this fiscal year, several topics have been raised by the Board that warrant such discussion. The Board retreat is one opportunity for the Board to discuss exploratory topics of interest and provide direction on whether and how to proceed with any future study. The following three exploratory topics will be discussed at the December 9 Retreat:

#### **Private Fundraising for District Projects:**

Private fundraising can be an opportunity to augment District funding, for both General Fund as well as Measure AA projects, environmental and educational programing, and ongoing maintenance. Most recently, private fundraising has been discussed for the Mount Umunhum radar tower and the Bear Creek Stables projects.

Depending on the types of projects, private fundraising may or may not be appropriate, or have a reasonable success factor. The District currently does not have the know-how nor the capacity to develop a sustainable private fundraising effort. A training provided by a fundraising consultant (Neela Gentile from Partners for Progress) on October 1, 2019 to Board members and District management outlined that one-off fundraising versus sustainable fundraising is not advisable.

Private fundraising has been a topic of conversation, both formally and informally, this past year. Questions to consider regarding this topic include:

- *What is the Board's level of interest in pursuing private fundraising?*
- *Is this the right timing to consider private fundraising?*
- *Is private fundraising a high priority compared to other major efforts (Vision Plan priorities, Measure AA commitments, Areas of Special Focus)*
- *What are the limitations and challenges associated with fundraising and is the District prepared to overcome these limitations/challenges?*
- *What are the potential unintended consequences? (I.e. partner agency relationships)*

As part of this discussion, the Board has an opportunity to discuss whether to direct the General Manager to further evaluate the opportunities and challenges of private fundraising during the upcoming fiscal year.

#### **Board Training Opportunities:**

Board members have participated in a variety of training and educational opportunities in the last several years, including:

- Media training led by Full Court Press
- Community engagement led by the Institute for Local Government
- Good governance led by former city manager Kevin Duggan
- Numerous regional progress seminars led by the Redwood City Chamber of Commerce
- Santa Cruz Mountain Stewardship Network's Spotlight Stewardship Program

Other past topics of interest have included: efficient communications between Board and staff, networking tools and strategies, and the evolving role of the Board.

Over the last several months, the Board has expressed a desire for new training opportunities. Options that the Board may want to consider for the upcoming year include:

- Trainings on good governance, transparency, and engagement led by the Institute for Local Government
- Seminars held by the League of California Cities or California Special District's Association related to topics of general interest for elected officials
- Understanding Board member communications styles to promote effective Board communications and interactions
- Inviting other local government leaders to share their experiences, expertise, and best practices

As part of this discussion, Board members have an opportunity to identify topics of interest for future trainings that can be scheduled during the upcoming fiscal year.

**Region-wide Issues Affecting the District's Mission:**

Throughout the nine-county Bay Area Region, population growth and a booming economy have led to a variety of regional benefits and negative impacts on those who live and work here, including increased job growth and wages, longer commute times and traffic congestion, increased home values/equity, and affordable housing shortages. With regards to the District, these region-wide forces are affecting visitation numbers, with a growing number of people seeking a respite and an outdoor nature experience by visiting their local open space preserves. As visitation increases, and the demand for more trails, parking, and access to new areas grows, the District is experiencing what appears to be a growing tension between meeting regional open space needs and addressing local concerns regarding parking, traffic, and use levels. These issues are not exclusive to the District. Other agencies are experiencing similar challenges as they consider implementing new public infrastructure improvements that provide region-wide benefits. The *San Jose Mercury News* recently published articles describing the increasing traffic congestion on Bay Area roadways, indicating that there is no longer a real difference between weekday and weekend traffic congestion (Attachment 1) and the increasing unhappiness among Bay Area residents, largely due to concerns regarding traffic, the cost of living, housing costs, and homelessness (Attachment 2).

To successfully further the District's mission, implement the Vision Plan priorities, and meet Measure AA commitments, and the District will need to continue exploring new opportunities to help address these challenges. In some instances, the District may be able to lead certain changes and improvements that benefit local communities. In other instances, the District may be able to facilitate discussions between local communities and other regional leaders and jurisdictions to help effect positive change.

For this topic, the Board has an opportunity to discuss the regionwide issues that are affecting the District's ability to carry out its mission and successfully deliver its services and projects for the benefit of the larger public. The Board can also consider possible next steps on how best to engage in broader regional conversations and explore potential solutions that benefit the region, including the District and its constituents.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Discussion of topics for possible study has no immediate fiscal impact. If the Board gives direction to further explore any of the topics, future reports will analyze the associated fiscal impacts. In addition, budgets for any resulting new projects that are identified for the upcoming fiscal year will be considered by the Board as part of the FY2020-21 CIAP/Budget review and approval process.

**BOARD COMMITTEE REVIEW**

This item was brought directly to the full Board given full Board interest and importance.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

## CEQA COMPLIANCE

This item is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act.

## NEXT STEPS

Topics receiving at least a majority of the Board's support will be forwarded to staff for further study and inclusion in the FY2020-21 CIAP. If any new topics are raised for discussion, the Board may direct the General Manager to add these topics to a future Board meeting agenda for discussion.

### Attachment:

1. *San Jose Mercury News* article, "Where traffic doesn't take a day off: These Bay Area freeways see terrible congestion on weekends too," dated December 1, 2019
2. *San Jose Mercury News* article, "Residents increasingly unhappy with Bay Area life, new poll finds," dated December 4, 2019

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# Where traffic doesn't take a day off: These Bay Area freeways see terrible congestion on weekends too

## 'You don't get a break' from jams on some busy freeways



SAN MATEO, CALIFORNIA – NOVEMBER 10: Traffic heads north, left, on Highway 101 in San Mateo, Calif., on Sunday, Nov. 10, 2019. (Nhat V. Meyer/Bay Area News Group)

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 PUBLISHED: December 1, 2019 at 5:00 am | UPDATED: December 2, 2019 at 6:12 am

EL CERRITO — When his work schedule changed a couple of years ago to include shifts on Saturdays and Sundays, tattoo artist Owen Partridge figured the silver lining would be a traffic-free commute.

“I thought, ‘Oh this will be easier,’” said Partridge, whose trip to work takes him down the often traffic-choked Eastshore Freeway from his home in Vallejo to shops in Berkeley and San Francisco.

But Partridge has come to learn the same lesson as countless Bay Area drivers who spend Monday through Friday slogging through [some of the worst congestion in the country](#), and look to their weekends for relief from the grind: Traffic here doesn't take a day off.

“Saturday is really like any other commute day,” Partridge said.

On some of the Bay Area's busiest freeways, the bumper-to-bumper traffic of weekend warriors can rival the worst of the work-week commute, according to data this news organization analyzed from the traffic analytics firm INRIX.

Generally speaking, of course, weekends tend to see less severe traffic than weekdays. Still, drivers expecting smooth sailing on their days off can be in for a rude awakening.

Take one especially painful stretch of the Eastshore Freeway that Partridge drives on the days he doesn't opt for BART.

San Francisco-bound commuters pack the road bumper-to-bumper before dawn, consistently earning the freeway a spot [near the top of annual rankings](#) of the [worst drives in the Bay Area](#). At the slowest point of the weekday morning rush, drivers average 19 mph between Albany, where Interstates 80 and 580 meet, and the Bay Bridge toll plaza. They average 18 mph coming the opposite way during the peak afternoon hours.

Weekend traffic is far better during the early mornings, but can be nearly as bad through the afternoons, when average speeds reach as low as 26 mph in both directions.

Looked at another way, drivers headed toward San Francisco are more likely to hit traffic on that stretch of Interstate 80 during weekends. The freeway is considered congested — meaning drivers' average speeds are less than 35 mph — for nine straight hours on Saturdays and Sundays, between 11 a.m. and 7 p.m. On weekdays, that's the case seven hours per day, mostly during the morning rush.

“You don't get a break,” said Sonja Kaufman, a teacher from El Cerrito who avoids the freeway as much as she can. “It is usually brutal.”

### **Simple cause: Too many cars**

Sporting events cause some weekend traffic jams. Construction projects cause others. And weekend drivers may not move as efficiently as their weekday counterparts: Whereas commuters know the mergers and bottlenecks of their route like the back of their hands, there are more visitors among weekend drivers, who may not be as familiar with the roads. Weekend drivers also are more likely to pay with cash at bridge tolls rather than using FasTrak.

## WEEKEND GRIDLOCK

Data from traffic analytics firms bear out what a lot of drivers know from experience: Congestion on some freeways is nearly as bad on Saturdays and Sundays as it is on weekdays.

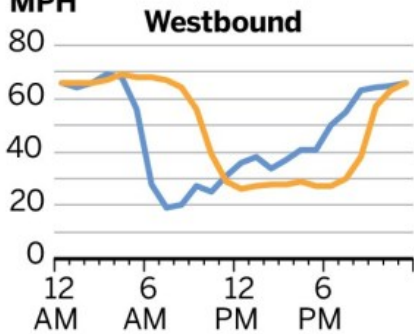


— Weekday speeds

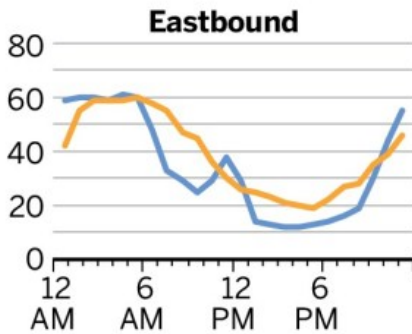
— Weekend speeds

**1** I-80 between the I-580 merger in Albany and the Bay Bridge toll plaza

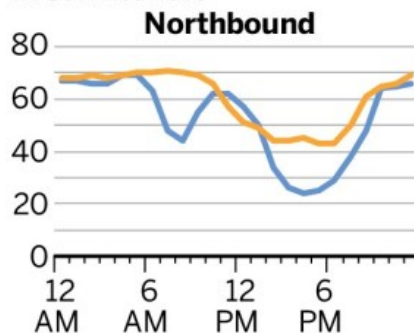
**Average MPH**



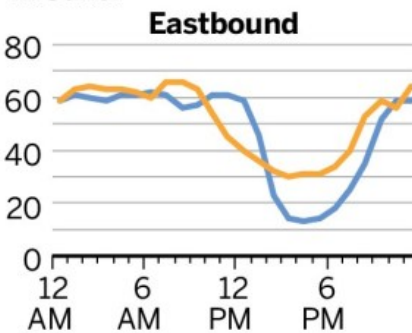
**2** Between the Bay Bridge's landfall in San Francisco and the 101/I-280 interchange



**3** I-880 between Thornton Avenue in Fremont and I-238 in San Leandro



**4** I-680 between Highway 262 in Fremont and Highway 84 in Sunol



Source: INRIX

BAY AREA NEWS GROUP



On Sunday just as Wednesday, the reason for traffic is the same: There are more cars on the road than space to move them — more beachgoers, hikers, Little League players, restaurant diners and, of course, weekend workers.

“There is just so much demand there, all days of the week,” Trevor Reed, an INRIX transportation analyst, said of the Bay Area.

Even though there are fewer cars on weekends overall, Reed said, “You’re still hitting that tipping point where you’re causing everything to fall apart.”

The Bay Area News Group analyzed data from INRIX that shows the average speed of cars along several busy Bay Area freeway corridors for every hour on a typical weekend and weekday, pulled from anonymized data the company collects from car navigation systems.

Some routes delivered the relief weekend drivers might hope for. Highway 101 between Interstate 880 in San Jose and Highway 92 in Foster City can be miserable at rush hour, with average speeds falling to just 22 mph along the 34-mile stretch during the southbound afternoon commute. Traffic flows almost freely on the weekends, however, with average speeds never falling below 60 mph.

For other routes, even if the weekend wasn’t as bad as the work-week rush, it is still no picnic.

Eastbound drivers traveling through San Francisco toward the Bay Bridge creep along at just 19 mph on average during the worst hours of Saturday and Sunday afternoons, between the Highway 101/Interstate 280 interchange and the point the bridge leaves the city. Compare that to an average of 12 mph on weekday afternoons, or 61 mph when traffic is lightest in the middle of the night.

On Interstate 680, eastbound drivers slow down to an average speed of 31 mph on weekend afternoons between Highway 262 in Fremont and Highway 84 in Sunol. That’s more than twice as fast as they manage during the worst of the afternoon commute, but less than half as slow as free-flowing traffic speeds.

One question that is hard to answer is whether weekend traffic is worse now than it used to be. INRIX’s data only goes back a couple of years, which don’t show major changes.

But there are signs that it might be: Weekday traffic congestion [rose 80 percent](#) from 2010 to 2017. And data from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission shows a typical weekend day this year now sees more than 40,000 additional people crossing Bay Area bridges compared to 2010.

“Before, you could depend on weekends being easy,” said Laura Sandlin, who lives in Antioch and has cut hair at an El Cerrito barber shop for more than 30 years. Traffic is a problem “all the time” now, she said.

### **Transit suffers on weekends**

While the obvious solution to traffic is to get people onto public transportation, luring Bay Area drivers out of their cars can be even tougher on the weekends.

“Our transportation system is really built for the commute,” said Arielle Fleisher, transportation policy director at the urban planning think-tank SPUR.



Public transit agencies typically run less frequent service, or eliminate certain routes entirely, over weekends and holidays, which tend to have fewer riders.

That leads people to view mass transit primarily as a tool to get to and from work, Fleisher said, and less as something they can use to get to friends' houses or the beach on their days off.

"It's really easy to fall into your default of your car on the weekends," she said.

Then there is the problem of destinations.

Chris Lepe, regional policy director for at the transportation advocacy nonprofit TransForm, said the region's public transit systems "are not targeted toward the kind of destinations people want to go to on the weekend."

The Bay Area's buses and trains funnel a lot of people into job centers such as downtown San Francisco from Monday to Friday, but destinations tend to be much more scattered on the weekends, and might include parks or beaches with few options for transit.

Then there are the longer weekend trips people take that would be difficult to do any day of the week without a car, given the complex, often poorly connected, a web of more than two-dozen public transit agencies that struggle to knit the Bay Area together.

Lepe, as you might imagine, is a pretty avid transit user: From his home in San Jose, he regularly takes Caltrain to San Francisco and Amtrak to the East Bay. But if he wants to visit friends or go camping in Sonoma County over the weekend, he said, "There isn't a good option."

So Lepe winds up driving instead — and often getting stuck in traffic.

There's no sign that the factors creating weekend traffic jams will be easing any time soon. As long as money is tight and transportation agencies need to prioritize spending, devoting money to improving commutes rather than weekend trips may not be a bad thing — after all, it would affect more people on more days each week, Lepe said.

"What makes the most sense in terms of bang for the buck?" he said.

So drivers will continue to jam the Bay Area's clogged freeways on Saturdays and Sundays, and try to find ways around weekend congestion just as they do Monday through Friday.

Sandlin, the El Cerrito barber, makes sure to take her weekend trips early: Get through the Eastshore Freeway by 11 a.m., she says, or you're in for trouble.

Once the traffic gets bad on weekends, Sandlin has an even more extreme workaround: To avoid the slog to and across the Bay Bridge when she drives to visit her children in San Francisco, she drives over the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge and the Golden Gate Bridge. Tolls means the trip winds up costing Sandlin more than twice as much, but she says the route is worth it.

"You've got to do what you've got to do, so you don't have to sit" in traffic, she said. "It's just too frustrating."

# Residents increasingly unhappy with Bay Area life, new poll finds

## Housing and traffic are among the top complaints

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PUBLISHED: December 4, 2019 at 9:00 am | UPDATED: December 4, 2019 at 11:25 am

A growing percentage of Bay Area residents are worried about the future of the region, citing housing and traffic woes among their main concerns.

In a five-county poll released Wednesday, 67% of respondents said they are “unhappy or worried about changes happening in the Bay Area,” up 10% from 2016. And 53% said they felt things in the region “have gotten pretty seriously off on the wrong track,” up from 45% three years ago.

The poll, funded by the San Francisco Foundation, highlights the downsides of living in one of the country’s most beautiful and sought-after locales and the threat the festering issues of housing affordability, homelessness and traffic congestion pose to the region’s future.

“There’s concern — and we’ve been seeing this in a lot of other polling as well — that residents are feeling kind of pessimistic, just generally. I think the cost of housing and traffic and all these other issues are causing people to feel unhappy,” said Ruth Bernstein, president and CEO of EMC Research, the national consulting firm that conducted the po

Wednesday’s survey data comes from 800 residents in Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, San Francisco and San Mateo counties — the five counties that make up the San Francisco Foundation’s primary coverage area. Santa Clara County was not included. The foundation, which provides funding for local causes from housing and homelessness to racial equity, first conducted a similar survey in 2016 as a way to gauge the main crises affecting its community.

This year’s poll was conducted online during an eight-day period in October.

Respondents ranked traffic, the cost of living, housing costs and homelessness as the four worst things about living in the Bay Area. Making housing more affordable was at the top of their list of concerns, with 79% ranking it as a priority.

“They are speaking to the need for action,” said Judith Bell, chief impact officer of the San Francisco Foundation. “For me, that data really suggests we need to deal with this crisis because it is a threat to our future.”

Wednesday's results confirm an ongoing trend. In a [poll released earlier this year](#) by this news organization and the Silicon Valley Leadership Group, nearly two-thirds of Bay Area residents said the quality of life here has gotten worse over the last five years. And 44% of respondents said they are likely to move out of the Bay Area in the next few years.

“The Bay Area’s housing and traffic crises are the existential threats to a strong economy and a vibrant quality of life,” said Carl Guardino, president and CEO of the Silicon Valley Leadership Group.

Residents who responded to the San Francisco Foundation survey placed the most faith in government and elected officials to fix the housing crisis, over nonprofits, investors and the business and tech community.

The majority of residents also expressed concern about diversity in the Bay Area — 65% of respondents said protecting the racial and cultural diversity of the region’s neighborhoods is a priority. And 77% of respondents agreed with this statement: “There should be affordable places to live for all people whether white, black or brown in my neighborhood.”

Fewer than half of respondents said they are excited about the Bay Area’s future — 46%, down from 54% three years ago. And more than half of people polled said they are worried about finding an affordable place to live.

“No region can sustain itself with this level of discord among its residents,” Matt Regan, senior vice president of public policy for the Bay Area Council, wrote in an email. “We have to make housing more affordable for everyone, and that can only be done by a massive increase in building.”