

Date: Wed, Feb 29, 2012

Subject: Comment on Application for PDA Status for the San Mateo County Midcoast Urban Area

To: kennethk@abag.ca.gov

Dear Mr. Kirkey:

As a 41 year resident of the San Mateo County Midcoast area, I have many concerns about the County's recent application for Priority Development Status. The Midcoast is an unincorporated area made up of subdivisions created over 100 years ago and is limited in its ability to accommodate new development. There are many environmental hazards like earthquake faults, erosion, flooding, tsunami zones and sea level rise that make many areas inappropriate for new building. In addition, the area is challenged by inadequate highway capacity, water availability and sewer services.

As part of the Coastal Zone, the Midcoast is subject to the regulations of the California Coastal Act. There has been little information available about how designation as a PDA will affect the Coastal Act protections that a majority of Californians voted into law and still overwhelmingly support. Evaluating how much additional development the area can support is an ongoing process and projections have been consistently downgraded with good reason over past decades.

There is a severe lack of public transportation on the Midcoast. The idea of building additional housing according to a model for transit-oriented development in area with almost no reliable public transit is absurd. Every time our local transit agency faces a budget shortfall, the one transit line we have on the Midcoast is threatened with elimination. The last time, senior citizens and those without motor vehicles who depend on the buses to go to and from work and school banded together and submitted a petition signed by over 400 desperate transit users, begging that bus service on the Midcoast be spared. If it were not for this organized, time-intensive effort, there is a very good chance that we would have lost the only public transportation we have, meager and inconvenient though it is.

While I understand the County's desire to receive funds for local planning projects, the Midcoast is not the appropriate place to receive the PDA designation. Investing funds here would be a misuse of public money that could be used far more effectively in areas with transit, more urban development patterns and better infrastructure. I urge you to remove the Midcoast from consideration for PDA designation.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to make my views known,

April Vargas
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