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Objections Overruled (Bay Vision Decides To Continue Its Push To Create a Regional Agency) - David Hagerty, Staff Writer, Benicia-Herald, Benicia, California (02/28/1991)

Objections Overruled

Bay Vision decides to continue its push to create a regional agency

By DAVID HAGERTY
Herald Staff Writer

Despite the objections of many local and regional government agencies, including the Solano County Board of Supervisors, commissioners from Bay Vision 2020 agreed Tuesday to continue meeting this year and to push for a regional board with authority over land use and planning decisions.

Bay Vision was assembled in 1990 with officials from cities, counties, regulatory agencies and businesses throughout the Bay Area to consider problems transcending the narrow boundaries of municipalities and counties.

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Regional

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Charged with finding long-term solutions to the related problems of traffic congestion, poor air quality, urban sprawl and diminished open space, the commission proposed creating a new regional board. That group would have authority over local and county officials and the power to approve plans for new business projects and residential growth.

The broad powers proposed for the agency have some critics, including Solano supervisors, claiming the new agency would restrict development by giving preference to the cities closest to Oakland and San Francisco, while excluding others cities on the perimeter.

In response to such criticism, Joe Bodovitz, project manager for Bay Vision, said, "The people who don't want to develop fear the larger cities will make them develop; and the people who do want to develop fear the cities won't let them. Obviously, both those can't be the case."

What the commission is recommending is that "wherever development does occur, it must be compact," Bodovitz said. Such controlled construction will facilitate the

development of transportation to and within those areas, which will thereby reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality.

"The main point is if the region is going to meet state and federal air (quality) law... attention has to be paid to transportation and land use," he said.

All areas of the state must meet standards set forth in the California Clean Air Act of 1990. The Bay Area exceeds those standards by more than one-third.

The Bay Area air district is working on its own plan to improve air quality, with the focus on cutting auto emissions by reducing the number of commuters.

It is to dispel such misconceptions as the concerns about restricted land use that the commission will continue meeting on a bi-monthly basis, Bodovitz said.

More than 100 government and other agencies have sent comments on Bay Vision's final report, which the commissioners will consider as they revise their proposals during future meetings.

"We really don't have an idea

of how long or what issues" will be discussed, Bodovitz said. But the commission will pursue getting legislation passed allowing for the formation of a regional government, he said.

One possible means to create the agency is Assembly Bill 3, sponsored by Assembly Speaker Willie Brown. That bill would divide the state into seven districts, and require each area to form a regional agency to contend with large-scale issues.

A similar bill by Brown failed to pass a single legislative committee last year. But AB 3 contains some significant changes that Brown hopes will increase its support.

Bay Vision's final report recommends the merger of three existing regional agencies — the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, and the Association of Bay Area Governments — into a single commission.

The commission would be comprised of a 35- to 40-member board with representatives for those three concerns and either elected or appointed officials from the nine counties in the Bay Area.

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