Memorandum

AGENDA ITEM 11

DATE: April 28, 2021

TO: Transportation Authority Board

FROM: Hugh Louch – Deputy Director for Planning Division

SUBJECT: 05/11/2021 Board Meeting : Adopt Updated Communities of Concern Boundaries for San Francisco

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RECOMMENDATION   ☐ Information   ☒ Action

Adopt updated Communities of Concern (CoCs) boundaries for San Francisco.

SUMMARY

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) has conducted an equity analysis for the past several Regional Transportation Plans to comply with federal civil rights and environmental justice laws. This equity analysis identified CoCs or areas with high concentrations of households with minority or low-income status, seniors, people who have limited English proficiency, and other factors. The definition of CoCs has evolved over the years. Most recently, MTC has updated their CoC definition for Plan Bay Area 2050, the Regional Transportation Plan update that is underway. MTC's definition of CoCs is conducted at the census tract level for consistency across the region; however, that methodology does not fully capture many of San Francisco's disadvantaged communities, which often are located in census tracts with more affluent neighborhoods. As we did in prior years, we conducted a similar analysis at a more fine-grain level – the census block-group level, which more accurately captures San Francisco's CoCs. Attachment 2 shows the Board-adopted CoC boundaries from 2017. If approved, the proposed new CoC boundaries shown in Attachment 3 will be used in our equity analysis in planning and will be prioritized for Transportation Authority grant funding.

☐ Fund Allocation	
☐ Fund Programming	
☐ Policy/Legislation	
☒ Plan/Study	
☐ Capital Project Oversight/Delivery	
☐ Budget/Finance	
☐ Contract/Agreement	
☐ Other:	

BACKGROUND

MTC's current CoCs methodology and definition are detailed in Attachment 1. As in the prior CoC update, MTC considered the following 8 factors and set concentration thresholds for each one based on Census tracts: people of color, low income (<200% Federal Poverty Level), limited English Proficiency, zero-vehicle household, seniors 75 years and over, people with disability, single-parent family, and cost-burdened renter. The boundaries of CoCs have changed as the CoC definition has evolved over the years and has shifted alongside changes in urban development and demographics captured through updated Census data. For Plan Bay Area 2050, MTC has kept the 2017 definition of CoCs but updated the concentration thresholds to reflect changes in Bay Area population.

MTC uses the CoCs in various planning and funding related efforts. MTC is currently working on the update to the Regional Transportation Plan known as Plan Bay Area (PBA) 2050. The plan's investment strategy assesses proposed projects and programs from across the Bay Area. This includes a benefit-cost assessment, a guiding principles assessment, and an equity assessment. CoCs are used as part of the equity assessment, to identify whether a project provides a point of access directly to one or more CoCs. For the first time in PBA 2050, MTC also conducted an equity assessment that did not focus on geography, but rather examined the accumulated benefits of an investment to different income groups across the region.

MTC prioritizes projects that are located within or serve CoCs for many of its competitive grant programs and for the regional grant programs that distribute funds through Congestion Management Agencies, including the Transportation Authority. These programs include the One Bay Area Grant (OBAG) program, which has funded projects such as the Broadway Chinatown Streetscape Improvement Project, and the Mansell Corridor Improvement Project. CoCs are also eligible to receive regional community-based transportation planning grant funding, which recently included the Western Addition Community-Based Transportation Plan. Moreover, some external grant programs, such as the state Active Transportation Program, assign higher scores for projects in disadvantaged communities, and MTC has used its CoC designation as a proxy for this when allowed.

At the local level, the Transportation Authority and other city agencies have used COCs in transportation funding (e.g. prioritizing projects that benefit CoCs in fund programs we administer) and in planning, notably for capturing how transportation impacts vary across the city. Common analyses include calculating the percent of the city's Vision Zero High-Injury Network that are present in CoCs and evaluating future plan scenarios for CoCs and non-CoCs for the San Francisco Transportation Plan, the countywide long-range transportation plan.

The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency's (SFMTA's) 2014 Muni Equity Strategy was developed using similar data. In defining Equity Strategy neighborhoods, SFMTA

considered concentrations of households with low income, residents who identify as non-white, households with zero vehicles, and affordable and public housing developments. Though SFMTA did not use MTC's CoC concentration thresholds, the resulting map closely corresponds to the existing and proposed CoC designations.

DISCUSSION

As in prior PBA cycles, MTC's equity analysis for the nine county Bay Area was conducted at the census tract level; however, that methodology does not fully capture many of San Francisco's disadvantaged communities, which often are located in the same census tracts with more affluent neighborhoods. Conducting a similar analysis at a more fine-grain level – the census block-group level – more accurately captures San Francisco's disadvantaged communities, particularly when they are immediately adjacent to more affluent areas. This is the approach we took in 2017 when the Board last adopted San Francisco CoCs as shown in Attachment 2. To capture these smaller pockets of disadvantaged communities in San Francisco that were not included in MTC's 2017 CoC definition, we applied MTC's concentration thresholds for the CoC factors to the block group level. In addition, if a grouping of block groups contained fewer than 10,000 residents, they were not included in the 2017 San Francisco CoC definition.

For the 2021 CoC update, we applied a similar methodology but removed the minimum population of 10,000 residents. In San Francisco, a census tract, on average, has about 4,400 residents while a census block group has about 1,500 residents. San Francisco's total low-income population has decreased since 2017 and applying a minimum population size to the CoCs would further reduce the number of CoC areas across the city.

In sum, the proposed 2021 San Francisco County CoC definition (Attachment 3) includes the following criteria:

1) Census tracts already identified as CoCs per MTC's 2021 update and

2) Census block groups that meet MTC's existing threshold analysis and are contiguous with census tracts identified by MTC as CoCs.

As shown in Attachments 2 and 3, the proposed 2021 San Francisco CoCs are slightly different than the 2017 approved CoCs.

- San Francisco's low-income population has decreased, so there are fewer CoCs in the 2021 proposed map than in the 2017 approved map.

- For the most part, CoCs are found in the same general neighborhoods in both 2021 and 2017. Some exceptions include:

   o New in 2021: a small CoC in the outer Richmond. We expect that this is due to an aging population in a low-income, low-English proficiency, and low auto-ownership neighborhood.

- ○ Removed in 2021: CoCs in the eastern and southern parts of the Mission; CoCs along Alemany in the Bernal Heights/northern Excelsior neighborhood; and CoCs in the Excelsior. We expect that this is due, in part, to displacement. The income levels in each of these areas has increased, making them exceed MTC's income thresholds.

- ○ Shifts within neighborhoods: The CoC designation has shifted between adjacent census tracts and block groups in the Outer Mission/Ingleside and Lake Merced areas, and in North Beach.

Should the Board adopt the proposed CoC definition for San Francisco, we would begin using the 2021 CoCs map as part of our equity analysis for the San Francisco Transportation Plan 2050 (SFTP 2050) and other planning work, and in our grant application review, replacing the 2017 CoCs.

FINANCIAL IMPACTS

The recommended action would have no impact on the proposed amended Fiscal Year 2020/21 budget.

CAC POSITION

The CAC will be briefed on this item at its April 28, 2021 meeting.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

Attachment 1 - MTC Communities of Concern Methodology
Attachment 2 - MTC Communities of Concern 2017
Attachment 3 - 2021 Proposed San Francisco Communities of Concern

## Attachment 1: MTC Communities of Concern Methodology

MTC EQUITY ANALYSIS AND COMMUNITIES OF CONCERN DEFINITIONS

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) has conducted an equity analysis for the past several Regional Transportation Plans to comply with federal civil rights and environmental justice laws. The results of this equity analysis have identified a series of disadvantaged communities or "Communities of Concern (CoCs)." The definition of CoC has evolved over the last twenty years: the 1999, 2003 and 2007 Regional Transportation Plans defined census tracts with either 70% minority or 30% low-income households as CoCs. In 2013, CoCs were defined as any census tract with concentrations of 70% minority population and 30% low-income households, or census tracts with four or more "disadvantaged factors" (see Table 1). In 2017, MTC updated their methods to define CoCs as any census tract that either 1) has both a concentration of minority AND low income households or 2) has a concentration of low-income households and three of the remaining 6 disadvantaged factors. Rather than communities meeting ANY four disadvantaged factors, communities needed to contain at least the low-income concentration and then any other three disadvantaged factors.

Table 1: Communities of Concern Framework for Plan Bay Area 2050

Disadvantaged Factor	Previous 2017 Concentration Threshold	New 2021 Concentration Threshold
1. People of Color	70%	70%
2. Low Income (<200% Federal Poverty Level)	30%	28%
3. Limited English Proficiency	20%	12%
4. Zero-Vehicle Household	10%	15%
5. Seniors 75 Years and Over	10%	8%
6. People with Disability	25%	12%
7. Single-Parent Family	20%	18%
8. Cost-Burdened Renter	15%	14%
CoC is defined either as 1) census tracts with a concentration of both people of color and low income populations; OR 2) have a concentration of 3 or more of the remaining 6 factors (#3 to #8) but only IF they also have a concentration of low-income households. *Concentration thresholds are based on one half standard deviation above the regional population's mean.*		

For Plan Bay Area 2050, MTC has kept the 2017 definition of CoCs but updated the concentration thresholds to reflect changes in Bay Area population.
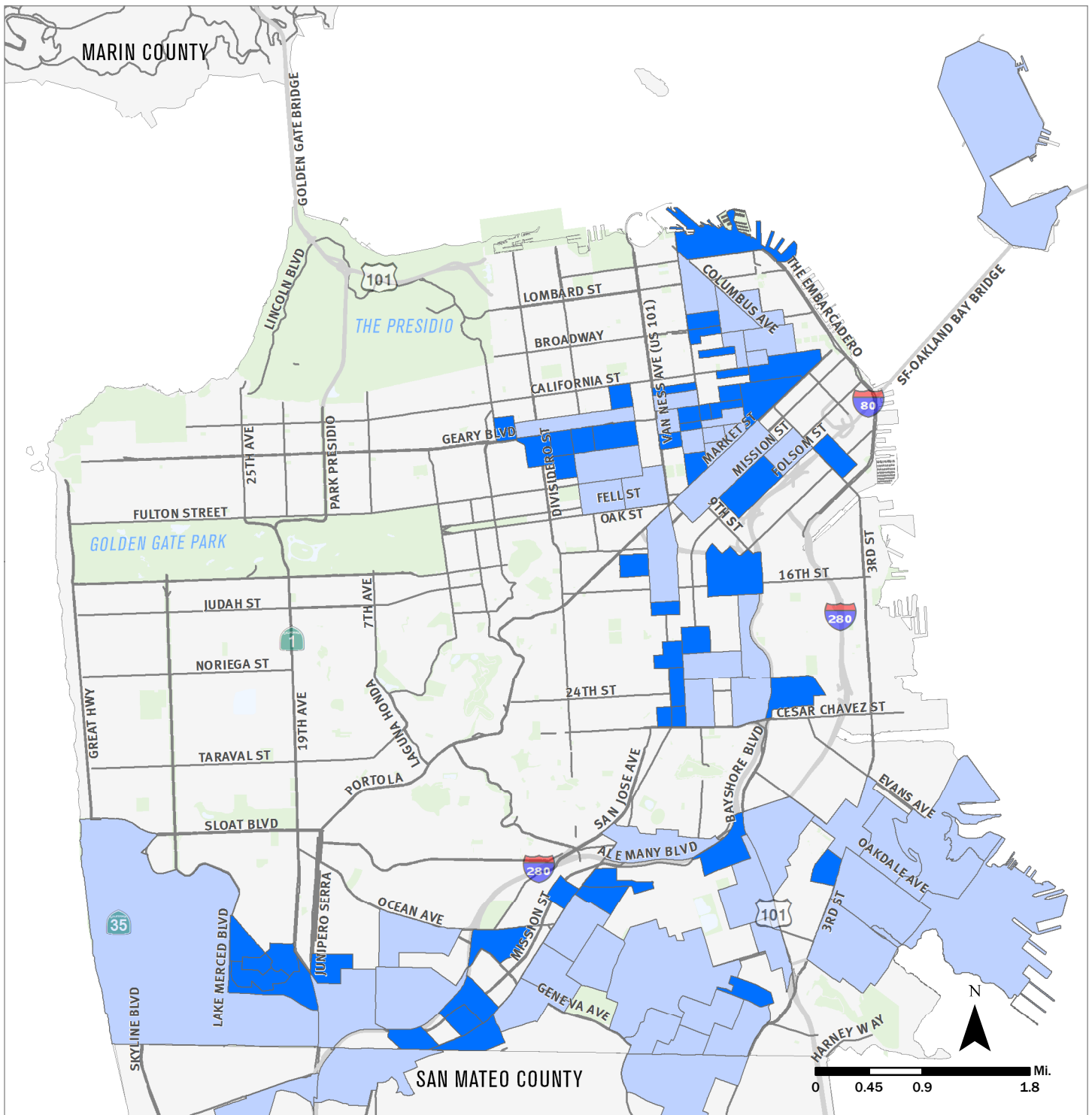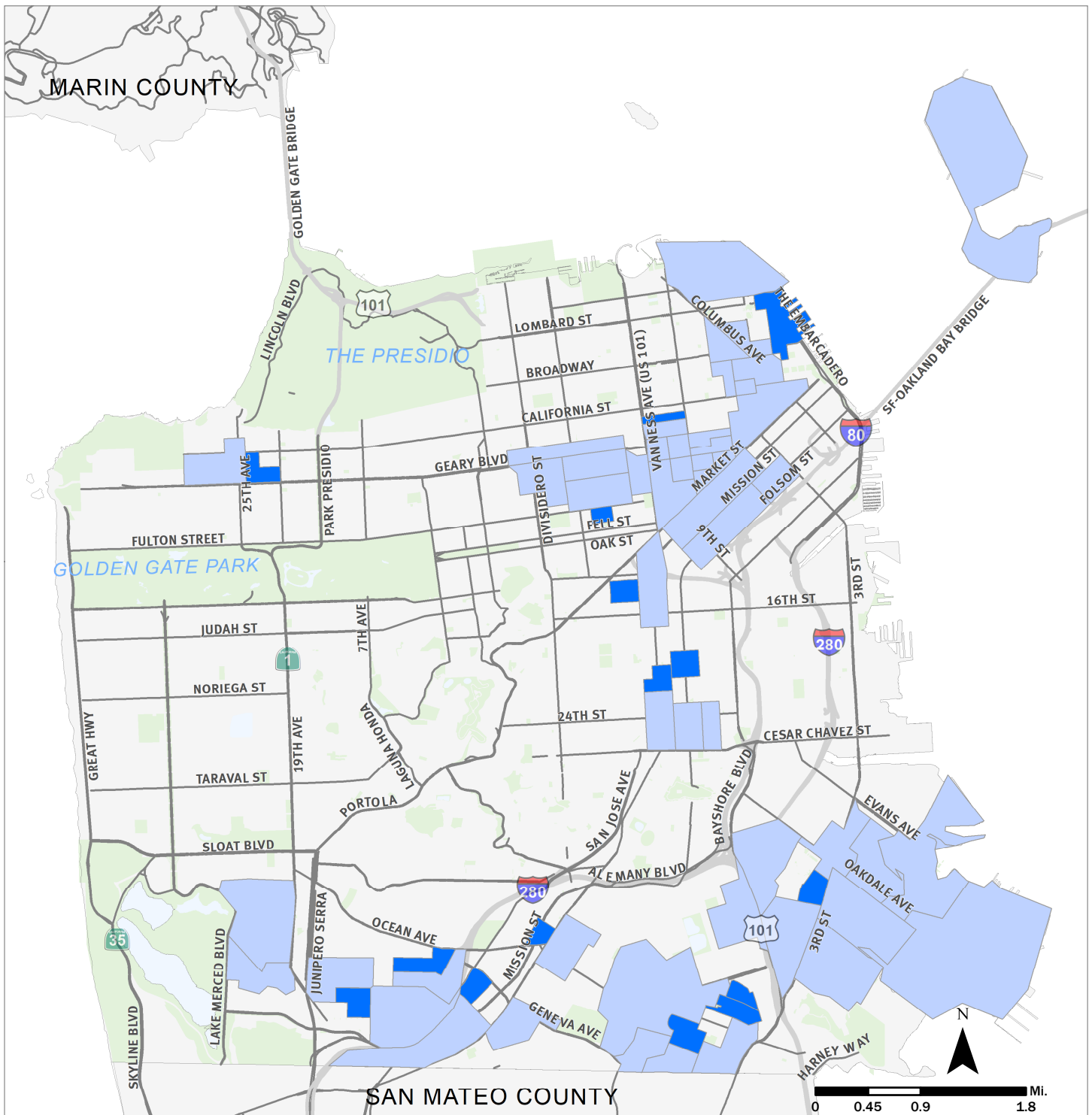
Adopted San Francisco Communities of Concern 2017

SFCTA 2017 supplemental Communities of Concern Boundaries

MTC 2017 Communities of Concern (Modified)

Parks and Open Space

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Data source used to identify Communities of Concern: American Community Survey 2011-2015
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Proposed San Francisco Communities of Concern 2021 (Draft)

San Francisco County Transportation Authority

MTC 2021 Communities of Concern

SFCTA 2021 supplemental Communities of Concern boundaries*

Parks and Open Space

*Supplemental boundaries based on analysis conducted at block group-level, any block group meeting MTC's Community of Concern definition and contiguous with MTC identified census tracts are included.