Title
San Francisco's Bay Vision 2020 Commission: a civic initiative for change

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A Civic Initiative for Change

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SAN FRANCISCO'S BAY VISION 2020 COMMISSION:
A CIVIC INITIATIVE FOR CHANGE

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3) Text: 1993-94 Assembly Bill 398 (V. Brown)

Notes: A schematic map of the Bay Area appears on page 6, and a table showing recent county population growth on page 8. Both are from Jones and Rothblatt, Governance of the San Francisco Area (see endnotes).

In the course of preparing this study, extensive notes were done on Bay Vision 2020 Commission meetings. If they would be of value to you, please be in touch with P. Lydon at (510) 644-8064.
INTRODUCTION: THE WRITER'S PERSPECTIVE AND THE SETTING FOR POLICY-MAKING.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper describes the convening and work of Bay Vision 2020, a voluntary blue ribbon commission formed in the fall of 1989 to consider the thirty year future of the San Francisco Bay Area. It discusses some of the issues raised by the Commission's work, with the intent to help people in other parts of the country who would like to take action on similar urban problems.

The report then offers briefer coverage of the Bay Vision Action Coalition, a successor advocacy group which shaped the Bay Vision 2020 Commission's proposals into Senate Bill 797 of the California Legislature, sponsored by Sen. Rebecca Morgan. At the tumultuous end of the 1991-92 legislative session, the Assembly passed SB 797, but it was defeated in a 16-20 vote in the Senate on August 30, 1992.

The Morgan bill was re-introduced as SB 153 at the beginning of 1993, but since the needed additional votes for it in the Senate were not in sight, attention to it was eclipsed by Assembly Bill 398, introduced by Assemblywoman Valerie Brown of Sonoma. AB 398 (V. Brown) can fairly be described as a reaction to the Bay Vision proposals; after extended negotiations, it absorbed many of their policy points, but greatly watered down their administrative provisions. It, too, did not obtain passage in the first year of the 1993-94 session of the California Legislature; in the latter stages of legislative work on it, the Bay Vision coalition split on supporting it; basically on whether half a loaf was better than none.

The discussion that follows is not value-free. Settling in California after several years abroad, the writer is disappointed and impatient at the slowed growth of our productivity, and even more disturbed by the widened differences of well-being among Americans. Cultural pluralism complicates the work of leadership, but one senses that too many members of the traditional educated "middle class" in our country are complacent, or withdrawn from the life of the overall community. For many years we have not supported the broad public policy steps, or the savings and the investments, that are necessary to benefit from advancing technology, and to meet equitably the needs of a growing and changing population.

The summarizing symptoms of our failure to save and invest in productivity are our national budget and trade deficits. The most troubling problems, however, are something more than productivity lags: Americans are less unified and have greater differences between rich and poor, "ins" and "outs", than in the recent past. We see the extremes daily in homelessness and in the ghettos, but many voices join analyst Mervin Field in warning that California is dividing itself into two societies. If present trends continue, Field points out, about half of Californians will live in a modern world of property, education and good jobs; the other half will live in a narrower world of lower skills, less medical care, less consumption, more familial and economic instability, and less social participation beyond their immediate circles, including low voting participation. In the stunningly beautiful Bay Area, as elsewhere, spatial flight and residential segregation are contributing to a metropolitan region of economic and ethnic apartheid. If it continues to develop and harden, such a split society of unshared modernity and resources would be an immense failure of us all.

The United States could expect improved productivity and solidarity in the future if we were coming from a time of dynamic and creative public policy. But the idea of public policy itself has been put into disrepute. In the last decade, to protect private autonomy against community constraints —
most concretely to preserve private wealth from taxation — our collective instrument, government, has been given an exaggerated bad name. Opponents can deflect almost any effort by saying that it will mean "more government."

This paper describes an effort by a group of reformist citizens, very much drawn from the middle class elite and at first intentionally working outside government, to grapple with harmful trends in the fifth largest — and singularly favored — metropolitan area of the United States. The Bay Vision 2020 Commission convened because of the admitted inability of existing governments to respond to well known and ingrained problems. But the impasse was not just among governments. It was rooted in the localism, short-sightedness and reluctance to pool resources of our society as a whole in this period.

I share the commission's perspective that the damages of urban sprawl are real and important. I see the Bay Vision convenors, leadership, and commissioners as people who moved into a vacuum and tried, with an extreme caution and tact, to create a forum where better and broader decisions could be made for this metropolitan region's more than six million people, forecast to become seven million soon after the turn of the century. After extended discussion, the Bay Vision Commission called for incrementally more unified and authoritative metropolitan governance, focused on land use and transportation. Such a region-bridging forum should mitigate the divide between two economic classes foreseen by Mervin Field, since for many of the smaller suburban cities the struggle to preserve independence is in part an effort to preserve class separations.

I think that such a regional body is needed, but that it is only one instrumental step in a much longer path of reforms needed to make life in this metropolitan city less wasteful and more social, more productive and more satisfying for all its people. A few members of the Bay Vision 2020 Commission shared such "utopian" hopes, but both those members and their less ambitious colleagues repeatedly trimmed their sails to attract majority legislative support. The group was pragmatic; it wanted to be effective in the real world, and it knew it was struggling against public inertia and a complex web of public and special interests.

Therefore the Commissioners self-edited and diluted their regionalist proposals in their own meetings, and saw them substantially further watered down as they were later shaped into a legislative bill. It is the perspective of this paper that the vigor was nonetheless on the side of the commission. Over thirty months and more than fifty extended meetings, the Bay Vision commissioners and the Action Coalition deliberators took to the oars in a becalmed situation. The short view, the culture of complacency and torpor of leadership was in their environment, in the local officials, the public, and the administrations in Sacramento and Washington.

This paper is based primarily on regular attendance as an observer at the Bay Vision 2020 Commission's meetings. The commission's convenors, leadership and members were open and helpful throughout, in several cases offering time for interviews. Project Manager Joseph E. Bodovitz did a helpful — and entirely non-committing — reading of an earlier draft.

Similarly, extremely helpful comments on the draft preceding this one were done by several members or observers of Bay Vision 2020, among whom Revan Tranter, T.J.Kent, Sarah Hamlen, Ora Huth, Dwight Steele, Eugene Lee, and Mel Mogulof should be singled out for their remarkably generous offerings of time, expertise and care. I am very grateful to all commenters, but I have not incorporated
all their suggestions, and so remain responsible for the gaps and errors in the text which indubitably remain!

The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation provided support for this effort through the Institute of Governmental Studies of the University of California at Berkeley.

Victor Jones, Emeritus Professor of Political Science at the University of California at Berkeley, one of the earliest and longest-running American students of metropolitan regionalism, unstintingly provided insight, deep background knowledge, and advice over many months. Most of what is right in this text came from Victor Jones.

Readers of this working paper are invited to communicate comments on the subject or on the paper to Peter Lydon at the Institute of Governmental Studies, or at 1584 LeRoy Avenue, Berkeley, CA, 94708 (510-644-8064).
Regionalism is a growing trend, and rightly so, because the metropolitan area is the critical level of analysis and action. The city as you see it from an airplane is the real city.


I. THE CHALLENGE OF METROPOLITAN URBAN SPRAWL, AND CITIZENS' RESPONSES

Metropolitan growth in the form of sprawl; social divisions, burdened productivity.

In the predominantly prosperous twenty years from 1968 to 1988, the population of the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area grew in total by about a million people, from less than five million to approaching six million. It continues to grow at about that pace, and can expect to be at seven million not far beyond the turn of the century.

The Bay Area grew mostly by pushing outward from traditional settled areas. The southern part of the region — Silicon Valley — grew the most dramatically, but urban/suburban growth pushed considerably outward in all directions. Between 1980 and 1988, Santa Rosa in the north, Dublin in the east, and San Jose in the south grew respectively by 30%, 63% and 16%. While population densities in urbanized central parts of the region stayed essentially the same, 20,000 rural or open acres of land were taken up per year by buildings or roads. Outward growth of housing followed by the movement of worksites to the suburbs has become predominant in the structure — and daily life — of the metropolitan region, making the older fully urban style of San Francisco almost a footnote.

This very twentieth century, very American, form of horizontal expansion has been called "deconcentration." The automobile, the truck and the freeway made it possible, and reciprocally the geographic dispersion encouraged tremendous growth in the number of cars in this twenty years, and an even greater growth in vehicle miles traveled. But the second of the decades, 1978 to 1988, was also a period of public reaction against collective planning and problem solving in the United States: there was pronounced tax resistance in California, spearheaded by Proposition 13 and the Gann public spending limits which passed by popular vote in the late seventies. It was also a time of low investment in public infrastructure for mobility; hardly any new miles of major roads were added to the existing system, and after finishing the 78-mile Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) rail system in 1972, there was no major new investment in public transit until San Jose's 18-mile light rail line at the end of the eighties.

Twenty years of 4% or more annual growth in vehicle miles on the same roads resulted in a transportation system mired in congestion. Frequent slow-downs, and even full stop waiting are routinely part of an ordinary daytime arterial trip. San Francisco-Oakland led Washington, D.C. and Los Angeles to be judged the most congested area in the country. Responding to poll-takers, the Bay Area's population ranked traffic congestion, steadily worsening throughout the period, as the top regional problem for nine years in a row. Federal Clean Air laws and even more demanding California legislation have produced a long period of improvements in air quality by cutting emissions from industrial sources, by requiring catalytic converters on automobile exhaust systems, and by demanding higher fuel mileage, which favored smaller engines. But by the late 1980s, the growth in vehicle miles and the congestion of traffic led experts to expect an increase in overall vehicle emissions and a resumed deteriorating trend in air quality during the late 1990's. On many days a discolored
### Table  
**Population by County in the San Francisco Bay Area: 1980-90**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>1980</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>Difference 1980-90</th>
<th>% Distribution of Absolute Increase</th>
<th>% Distribution of Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Population</td>
<td></td>
<td>Numerical</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Alameda</td>
<td>1,105,379</td>
<td>1,279,182</td>
<td>173,803</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>20.6</td>
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<td>Contra Costa</td>
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<td>803,732</td>
<td>147,401</td>
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<td>17.5</td>
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<td>Marin</td>
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<td>230,096</td>
<td>7,504</td>
<td>3.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Napa</td>
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<td>110,765</td>
<td>11,566</td>
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<tr>
<td>San Francisco</td>
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<td>723,959</td>
<td>44,985</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
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<td>San Mateo</td>
<td>587,329</td>
<td>649,623</td>
<td>62,294</td>
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<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Clara</td>
<td>1,295,071</td>
<td>1,497,577</td>
<td>202,506</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>23.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Solano</td>
<td>235,203</td>
<td>340,421</td>
<td>105,218</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonoma</td>
<td>299,681</td>
<td>388,222</td>
<td>88,541</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>6,023,577</td>
<td>843,818</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

haze hangs over the region, obscuring the glorious panoramic views over the Bay and the Golden Gate from the surrounding hills which have always been a particular pride and pleasure of the Bay Area.

In the same twenty years from 1968 to 1988, new housing construction lagged sharply behind population and job growth. The Bay Area came to have very close to the highest priced housing in the country. The housing-led high cost of living made it very difficult for industry to maintain low production costs here. That discouraged enterprises which sell their products to the general United States market from staying here or coming to the region. Some Silicon Valley hi-tech companies sent the labor-intensive manufacturing parts of their business elsewhere. This often left the Bay Area with well paid but shallow-rooted design and headquarter functions.

There were no sudden changes or crises in this process, which is itself an important aspect of the picture, but these gradual developments had a sapping effect on daily life for the population. Especially when people bought a house, they felt very sharply the rise in the costs of living. More and more families needed two job-holders. Long commutes by one or both parents strained family lives. Many Bay Area people were troubled by widespread homelessness and public begging, and had a generalized sense of a clouding of the sparkling quality of life for which the Bay Area had long been highly valued.

Inhabitants came to associate growth not with prosperity and vitality, but with exhausting hours of inching in a freeway traffic jam. Discomfort at increased crowding in public circumstances became a part of life, like the seemingly relentless loss of open space and farm lands to semi-urban landscapes of shopping centers and tract houses. There was a strong sense that urban schools were in decline. This was a reason for many to leave the cities, and many better-off families who did not move to the outer rim of the region quietly put their children into the private schools which proliferated.

These two decades of population growth in the Bay Area also witnessed developments which were not directly related to geographic extension and sprawl, but were important for the region's future. There was perceptible growth in the proportions of Hispanic and Asian people in the population. Census experts expected Hispanics and Asians to increase their shares until each amounted to about a quarter of the population within the next thirty years. With African-Americans remaining at a little less than ten percent, non-Hispanic whites, who had been 69% of the population in 1980, would be substantially less than half the Bay Area population by 2005, although whites' social and political predominance would clearly continue long after their numerical majority was gone. Poverty, violence, drug abuse, and low employment persisted intimidatingly in five or six urban enclaves, primarily African-American.

"Sprawl" was a name for growth of the population and the economy in the spread-out, individualized, car-dependent form that the Bay Area was experiencing; it was also aptly called "Los Angelization". Many people did not give sprawl much thought, and many considered it the expectable, and even desirable, state of affairs in America and California. But it troubled others, who saw the new style as a loss of San Francisco's and the Bay Area's particular urbanity and civilization on the West Coast.

Relatively few people seemed to recognize outward-pushing mass suburbia's built-in expensiveness, in land, in energy, in personal time, in capital for freshly built infrastructure, and in other forms. Brian Ketchum estimates that spatial dispersion and auto transportation absorb up to a quarter of everything produced in the United States, but inexpensive gasoline and national level subsidies such as the tax deductibility of mortgage interest, masked costs. The fact that such suburbanization affected all parts of the United States without differentiation, and that economic competition from lower-
paid workers abroad who were not living the suburban life, was only beginning, also made the
costliness of the "American way of life" less perceptible.

The status quo, moreover, has its appeals. Few citizens wanted to give up growth entirely, and
certainly not to crimp the high employment and general prosperity to which the post-war Bay Area was
accustomed. Individualist American culture, perhaps linked to nostalgia for a "frontier" tradition,
endorses a life with as much space as possible around each house, in which much time and ego
commitment is given to driving a car. Moving to the far edge of the metropolitan area and driving a lot
seems as right as rain to many Americans and their families, especially those from rural or small town
backgrounds. The individual car is felt to be a personal security envelope, in contrast to the
vulnerability which some people feel when using public transportation, and the suburbs are seen as
secure from crime and violence, a pervasive and highly influential conception, perhaps particularly
important to families understandably concerned about the safety of their children. Many "mainstream"
people are aware of few alternatives to the suburbs at affordable prices. In a sense, they are not even
looking for alternatives, and many people rising into the "mainstream" from lower economic strata and
perhaps assimilating to the general culture from minority or immigrant backgrounds, accept raising a
family in a detached house in the suburbs as a natural and important goal.

The present situation, moreover, is fluid and open. Although low in cooperation among people
or municipalities, it offers freedom for individuals, localities or groups to compete for advantageous or
improved positions. "Fiscalization of land use", which will be discussed below, is an expression of this:
state laws on local taxation lead cities to compete against one another to attract the businesses which
will benefit local tax revenues. Similarly, localities in practice are free to avoid building the housing,
especially low and middle income housing, which costs much more to serve than it brings in in taxes.
Various small and large cities can strive, according to their quite different lights, to attract the forms of
growth which will help their budgets and to repel the undesirable forms. By now, this is a familiar
status quo to which city leaders are adjusted, and moreover, many localities believe that they can do
better in this "game", or market, than by taking part in a binding system of regionwide consultation,
cooperation, and sharing of the good and the bad results of growth.

Within this framework, local growth conflicts do mobilize people's intense emotions — a
neighborhood gets up in arms to resist airport noise, to fight low income housing, or indeed, any form
of denser housing. In one outlying county, a municipality campaigns to bring in a large corporation's
industrial complex; in an adjacent agricultural or "open space" county, elected officials would campaign
equally vigorously to keep such a complex out. After a local electoral sweep, either one of such
counties could reverse its orientation. Local growth control statutes have proliferated under local ballot
box impetus, but they do not solve the broader regional problem.

As matters stood in 1989, the Bay Area's form of growth fit into a broader cultural picture and
had developed very gradually, but trends pointed toward a worse rather than a better future. As more
outlying land was used at low densities for houses, services and worksites, destinations could only
become more dispersed and car and truck travel distances longer. In fact, the nine-county Bay Area
had more jobs than it did people, because of the high cost of housing; increasingly workers were
commuting long distances into the Bay Area from remote but less expensive housing in more rural
neighboring counties. Congestion and air quality could only worsen. Ordinary people felt various
irksome symptoms, but had little awareness of the syndrome as a whole. Apart from building or
widening freeways, few citizens saw alternative paths, or thought that the metropolitan pattern could be
made subject to control or to policy. Conspicuously, there was only the most embryonic such
perception in a political or political party framework.
When they reflected on sprawl or on one of its manifestations, many citizens and community leaders were worried that it was a poor line of development, but they also recognized it as a well established pattern, assumed to be "natural" in California, and having a lot of economic and technological momentum behind it. They saw sprawl as a diffuse and difficult matter to change, and even as a hard subject for which to "find the handle" in the social and political decision-making process as it existed at the end of the 1980's.

Who will take action?

The San Francisco Bay Area is by no means the only part of the United States to suffer from unmanaged horizontal growth, nor the first to try to work against it. The Bay Area has a long tradition of environmentalist anxiety about sprawl and domination by the automobile. Among the many flourishing environmentalist organizations, the Greenbelt Alliance, formerly People for Open Space, and before that known as Citizens for Regional Parks and Recreation, has voiced opposition to these trends with particular focus and vigor. In the late sixties, the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) developed and endorsed a "Regional Plan 1970-1990". It was explicitly "city centered" to favor urban concentration and maximum use of existing infrastructure in place of outward dispersion and new facilities construction. Although its ideas had some positive influence in the northern counties, in practice, as a current regionalist leader lamented, the Regional Plan of 1970 "went on the shelf and was forgotten."^^

In the past, within state and federal frameworks the region has made large-scale and impressive sector-by-sector investments, notably in water supply, road and bridge building, and rapid transit (BART). More recently it has had successes in specialized areas of government, notably creating in the 1960s a state-empowered agency, the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) to protect San Francisco Bay itself from filling and adverse development.

The Bay Area also has a close to century-old tradition of efforts to create a regional level of authority above its now nine counties and one hundred cities. Restraining sprawl is the current motivation for such regionalism. But effectiveness against sprawl would require powers in general administration and land use control, and for these, region-wide approaches have never made headway against a vigorous tradition of local control by the existing cities and counties. The most important recent case was the set of repeated efforts from 1967 to 1975, led by former Richmond Assemblyman John Knox, to legislate an authoritative Bay Area planning and land use control agency. By the narrowest of margins in the California Senate, the Knox drive did not succeed. There has been a long pause in regional efforts since then, but the Knox bills remain a prominent roadmark.

By 1988, despite steady population growth, there had been a hiatus of more than a decade in public and political attention to regional organization, at least ten years of tax-resistance, two decades of low regional infrastructure investment, and few major social policy departures since the mid-seventies. Who would be the source, in the Bay Area, of a definition of the situation that would ring an alarm bell? Who would propose remedies?

We can start with a primary division between the public and the private sectors.

The public sector and different levels of government:

Most Americans think of broad social and economic problems as the business of government, broadly construed. But modern government has many levels. In the perspective of 1989, we can begin by ruling out the federal level. Through the 1970's, the federal level shared substantial revenue from its
tax stream with cities. Through the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Office of
Management and Budget, the federal government took a positive interest in the formation of regional
Councils of Governments and encouraged inter-municipal cooperation. The Bay Area had been a
leading, and in ways a perplexing case for Washington administrators, but by 1988, with the exception
of work with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), Federal interest and participation in
such matters here was close to non-existent.

Consider metropolitan sprawl in a sequence moving from causes to effects. First come land
use choices (the public sector side of which is commonly called zoning—the public decisions about what
kind of activity is to take place where). The next link in the chain is transportation, which depends on
where land use decisions have placed destinations in relation to one another. (Transportation
infrastructure can also determine where development goes.) An important result of how land use and
transportation are managed is good or bad air quality, now largely determined by auto and truck
emissions.

In the United States constitutional system, the core governmental authority is at the state level.
This is the fundamental power to make laws and to impose taxes backed by physical coercion, for
example, a jail sentence. But from its beginnings California has delegated the land use control aspect
of legitimate social power to city and county governments. After many decades, city and county
leaders now act with a religious conviction that land use control is a local right, and they are supported
in this by public opinion. At root, broad regional concerns about dispersion and traffic generation have
to be reached through planning or adjusting land uses, and for this purpose the public sector authority
of the Bay Area is very decentralized. Land use and building decisions are done according to general
plans and zoning maps laid down by the 100-plus localities in the Bay Area. Elected city leaders write
the plans and grant and refuse exceptions according to their local wisdom. No consultation among
localities is required, and little is done in practice; rather, localities are busily in competition with one
another to attract financially beneficial land uses and to exclude less desirable ones. Any effort to
change a general pattern of land use—such as urban sprawl—would have to be fought "retail" over
hundreds of projects in dozens of localities, a daunting prospect.

The next level up from the scores of cities and counties is the State of California. But the state
in this case is too big; the Bay Area makes up roughly one fifth of California's population, and is not the
first, but the second-ranking major urban region after Los Angeles. Moreover, a 1991 League of
Women Voters poll makes clear that Bay Area citizens, have sharply negative views about decision-
making for the region by the state government. They do not want "made in Sacramento" solutions to
Bay Area problems.

There is a logic behind that attitude, particularly for advocates of regionalism and city-centered
growth. The impulse to preserve open space, to increase density, social integration and mass transit,
to de-emphasize roadbuilding and the use of the car, and to extend the role of government for these
purposes, has an uphill battle in the Bay Area. But that impulse is historically much stronger here than
elsewhere in the state. For the longer-urbanized Bay Area to accept undifferentiated state-wide
approaches, heavily influenced by demographically predominant Southern California and Central Valley,
would mean falling under the sway of a more rural, car-accepting, pro-development and socially
conservative overall community. For the San Francisco Bay Area, all-California solutions are likely to
mean being pulled backward with regard to its own evolution and agenda.

In Oregon, Florida, and New Jersey the growth management question was handled by the state
level government and notably driven forward by committed Governors—McCall, Graham, and Kean,
respectively. In the case of San Francisco Bay Area in the 1970's and 1980's, political factors worked against a positive state role.

Ronald Reagan, governing from 1967 to 1975, established a local government commission but otherwise never interested himself in the matter. It is not clear whether he would have signed or vetoed the closest-to-success Knox bill had it obtained one or two more state Senate votes and passed in 1974, but it is quite likely that he would have vetoed it. The Jerry Brown administration, 1975-1983, also did not focus on regional organization or indeed on growth management as an agenda item. The Republican administration of George Deukmejian from 1983 through 1990, although it did not control the legislature, resisted fresh tasks for government at any level, and certainly did not want to create new responsibilities for Sacramento or to build new "layers" of government to deal with the concerns of legally non-existent "regions".

In 1988, one observer reports, proposals were made to the Governor from the state bureaucracy and assembly for the creation of a state commission on long range growth and regionalism issues; Governor Deukmejian flatly rejected any such initiative. Potential reformers took this as confirmation of their assumption that reform in California would have to wait until after the Deukmejian administration left office in January 1991.

Local elections are generally non-partisan, and the political parties as such never reached for this set of questions until very late in the day, effectively until after Bay Vision was organized as a major voluntary, extra-governmental effort in the Bay Area, and the Los Angeles 2000 Commission had already been underway three years in Southern California. Neither the Democratic nor the Republican party had taken a focused interest in metropolitan affairs or growth management for many years, and it is not sure how they would have aligned themselves if they had been active. Many environmentalists were Republican, but most Republicans were not environmentalists, and some were emphatically not so. Some Democrats were very serious environmentalists, but Democrats as a party were chary of growth issues, with their anti-immigration and anti-ethnic overtones, and were certainly not ready for growth restricting policies. The staff of the State Assembly Democratic leadership prepared a set of long-run looks at the California situation in air quality, transportation, and the future of local government in 1988, and in 1989 and 1991 the California Senate brought out growth management studies. But policies to manage growth did not figure significantly in state-wide party platforms in 1988, nor in the Wilson/McCarthy Senatorial campaign, nor perceptibly in state Senate and Assembly races in the Bay Area in 1988, which was a presidential but not a gubernatorial election year.

In the Spring of 1990, perhaps prompted in part by Bay Vision's getting underway, California Assembly Speaker Willie Brown submitted Assembly Bill (AB) 4242, which proposed official growth management commissions at both state and regional levels, but Brown did not push it hard, and the bill died at the end of the session. Some attention was gathering, although the issue certainly remained at the second or third level of public and media attention. In the gubernatorial campaign that Fall, Democrat Dianne Feinstein called for a State Commission on Growth Management with a network of regional commissions below it. The eventual Republican victor, Pete Wilson called for the weaker step of beefing up the Governor's Office of Planning and Research to give growth problems more study at the state level. In a talk to the League of California Cities, and to a lesser extent in the single debate between Wilson and Feinstein, Wilson portrayed removing land use control from the hands of mayors and city councils, either to a regional level or to Sacramento, as an intrusive threat of excessive government.

Given the absence of any effective level of general governing power in California in the "space" between the authorities of the state and the powers of the counties and cities, and given the
aggressive lack of interest from the Deukmejian administration, it proved to be a Santa Clara County supervisor, Rod Diridon, at the head of a voluntary sub-set of Bay Area local elected officials he had organized, who took up the baton for the public sector. Under Diridon's impetus, a number of elected officials—primarily drawn from those who had served on regional special purpose bodies—were ready to articulate concerns that the region's development was taking a damaging form, and to worry publicly about how little the existing dispersed apparatus of government was able to respond. Ironically, the rest of the local elected officials, with and without regional experience, later proved to be major adversaries of regionalist proposals from their colleagues.

A leader from the public sector: Santa Clara County Supervisor Diridon

One ambitious individual stood out sharply among the city and county elected officials with service on regional bodies. Rod Diridon was born in 1939, and educated in Business Administration at San Jose State University. He did Navy service in Vietnam, and thereafter worked as a systems analyst, for Lockheed and independently. He became a city council member in Saratoga in 1972, and in 1974 won the Fourth District seat he now holds on the five-member Supervisors' Board of Santa Clara, the region's largest county. The city of San Jose and the bulk of Silicon Valley are in Santa Clara county.

Throughout his now nineteen years service as a Supervisor, Diridon took much more than the customary interest in regional affairs. He was always on one or more regional body, and had chaired both the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (Air Board). This meant hundreds of hours on often eye-glazing bodies where Diridon gave the impression of being substantially more alert and qualified than most people in the room. In the Fall of 1989, he was chairperson of the nineteen-member Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC).

MTC, the channel for federal transportation funds, is traditionally considered the most important of the special purpose regional bodies. Although he had served on everything, Diridon's particular interest was in transportation issues. For close to a decade, polling had identified traffic congestion as the regional problem of greatest interest—or indignation—for the public at large. Although his county seat was non-partisan, Diridon was an active Democrat. He had managed the Dukakis Presidential campaign in the South Bay in 1988, and he had a good working relationship with Congressman Norman Mineta, a former mayor of San Jose who was chairman of the House Urban Transportation Subcommittee in Washington.

Of middle height, trim and crisply articulate, Diridon is a visibly intelligent and decisive person with the manner of a professional politician but a greater interest in long range planning and public policy than most county supervisors. He characterized his own activism and drive well in an interview when he said, "Most people say, 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it.' I don't go along with that. I think we should be working on improving everything all the time." Diridon is best known as the man who over fifteen years planned and pressed for public rail transit in San Jose. Foes as well as friends now give him credit for being the moving force behind the 18-mile north-south Guadalupe Light Rail Line, fully completed and working in 1991, a multi-billion dollar land acquisition and construction project. The successful light rail is now attracting solid ridership, but it was a pioneering introduction of public rail into a region of rapid and sprawling growth which relied entirely, Los Angeles style, on a heavy network of freeways. Although Diridon suffers in some quarters from a reputation as an ambitious loner with difficulty organizing a solid constituency, who can shift positions with disconcerting speed, the light rail line was a distinguished case of perseverance, advocacy and upstream swimming.
Rod Diridon organized the participation of local officials in convening the Bay Vision 2020 Commission, that is to say that he was responsible for the public sector participation that represented a third of Bay Vision's support. Influenced by a talk on LA 2000 Joseph Bodovitz gave at a 1988 retreat of the MTC Board, Diridon thought that such a citizens' commission could make progress on the long range problems that the complex normal governing apparatus was not reaching. Under Diridon's impetus, MTC contributed an initial $25,000 to get the ball rolling, and a later $150,000 to the Bay Vision budget. This was seed money which made the effort credible to the foundations and corporations which respectively contributed about equal stakes, but months later in some cases. Diridon's activity brought in many of the other elected leaders who at least episodically took part, notably San Mateo County Supervisor Mary Griffin who was the President of ABAG in 1991 and 1992, Warren Hopkins of Rohnert Park in Sonoma County, Griffin's predecessor at ABAG, Supervisor Diane McKenna of Santa Clara County, Leo Bazile of Oakland and Susanna Schliendorf of Danville. His group was loosely knit into an organization known as the Locally Elected Convenors of Bay Vision. Among these officeholders issues of particular concern to regional elected officials were worked on, notably the number of seats to be reserved for elected officials on the to-be-proposed regional commission, the timing of the transition from the old to the new system, and the allocation of seats as between city and county level officials, a subject which proved surprisingly sensitive and delicate.

Diridon gave the Bay Vision 2020 Commissioners a lucid talk on July 9, 1990 in which he urged them to call for merger of the existing special purpose bodies, a policy they later made central to their recommendations. He also stressed the importance of raising the gasoline tax, and the need for tax equalization among localities, and made early mention of another theme which later became very prominent: creating sub-regional forums for greater closeness to the localities. Later, Diridon was a shuttling diplomat who presented the views of elected officials to the Action Coalition, and kept the Bay Vision perspective before regional office-holders in such forums as the ABAG Executive Board and General Assembly. Diridon was well known and not shy, and he tended to become a pole himself in the process. At times it was difficult to know to what extent he was speaking for a genuine group of local elected officials, and to what extent he was voicing his own regionalist views. Through his persistence and strength of personality, he attracted some people, but clearly made many others apprehensive, notably officeholders in the smaller counties and cities.

Thus, in the public sector, those who responded to the diffuse problem of metropolitan balkanization and sprawl were primarily local politicians who had acquired regionalist interests by sitting on the special function regional bodies as an optional outgrowth of their direct local governing responsibilities. They were galvanized and carried along by an ambitious maverick among them.

The private sector: the Bay Area Council and the Greenbelt alliance join in the Regional Issues Forum

In the private sector, thousands of land owners, land developers, families and companies take initiatives and make decisions on where to locate houses and businesses. There are certainly trends and patterns, but no centralized control and no unified place in the private sector to grasp for a regional handle of the problem. Two private groups, however, had longstanding region-wide objections to particular effects of sprawl:

Environmentalists, an important, generally well educated, affluent and highly articulate "liberal" political element in California, were distressed by the loss of open space to urban sprawl and were always vigilant on the subject of air quality, which largely depended on levels of car and truck traffic, since stationary sources of air pollution had been dealt with.
Environmentalists had been divided about the Knox regionalist reforms of the seventies, but at the critical moment of voting had decided not to support them.

The Bay Area Council (BAC), the regional association of large corporations, including Chevron, Bank of America, IBM and Sun Computers, and the telephone and gas and power utilities, was bothered by high housing costs in the Bay Area, and probably to a lesser extent, by congested mobility. People in expensive houses have to receive high wages, making for high labor costs. Some firms had to pay special housing subsidies to bring needed staff to the area. The high cost of housing increased the cost of everything produced here, and weakened the competitive position of every Bay Area product in national and world markets. The BAC, with a budget of about $1 million a year before project grants, aims to serve as a "platform for regional leadership" and has been a major supporter of regional integration initiatives for many years.21

A secondary but supportive role was played by the League of Women Voters of the Bay Area (LWVBA), which had at least one note-taking observer present at all the Bay Vision 2020 Commission's meetings. The Bay Area League is composed of the twenty-one local leagues in the nine-county region. It ran an extensive poll of both local officials and citizens in 1991 on growth management. Paul DeFalco, President of the LWVBA for 1990-92, was one of the most active Bay Vision Commission members, as was Sarah Conner, also a League member. The LWVBA and the League of Women Voters of California ultimately endorsed the Bay Vision legislation in Sacramento.

All these participants were familiar ones from the Knox bill struggles of the 1970's.

Three elements come together to mount a public commission, and select its members

Environmentalists traditionally consider big business an adversary. As two prominent public policy lobbyists in Northern California, the president of the BAC, Angelo Siracusa, and the executive director of the Greenbelt Alliance (GBA), Larry Orman were acquaintances with off-and-on working contacts. Both are forceful and articulate men. Siracusa, 63, with great confidence and bonhomie, is more than a casually good orator, and from long tenure in his job has developed a substantial mandate from the corporate leadership he works for to advocate his own strong regionalist views. The BAC's President was a long-standing campaigner for regional integration, and had come to mistrust arrangements for "voluntary" cooperation among cities. He sat on the boards of MTC and BCDC, and on the Regional Planning Committee of ABAG. Larry Orman, 45, started as a University of California at Berkeley city planning student of Professor Jack Kent, one of the founders of what became the Greenbelt Alliance. Kent advocated denser cities to create a workable metropolis of limited size, which would, as a consequence, also save open space. Orman is notable both for organizing abilities that greatly expanded the GBA's membership and budget during his tenure as executive director, and for analytical powers applied to the broadest city planning problems.

Although at first glance the GBA was anti-growth and the BAC was pro-growth, they had been in contact in the early 1980s through a project sponsored by the San Francisco Foundation on compact housing. Later Orman learned from Siracusa that the BAC was showing some movement on positions on which there had traditionally been disagreement with the GBA. Large business was becoming more persuaded that the attractiveness of the region's environment really helped recruit valuable technical and managerial manpower. The corporations were coming to see the area's "quality of life" as one of regional business's own assets. Business leaders' concerns with traffic congestion and housing costs were sharpening. Silicon Valley electronics firms, well represented in the BAC, were shipping the more labor intensive high technology production out of the area because of the high cost of housing and the
difficulty of getting around in the Bay Area. Environmentalists, on their side, were increasingly recognizing the political imperative of a productive economy, and many were uncomfortable seeming to oppose prosperity and employment, even as they often fell into that position.

George Sears, the managing partner of a leading law firm, and a senior, long-time member of the Bay Area Council who was also a member of the Greenbelt Alliance’s board, made a key bridging overture between the two groups at a meeting in the law firm’s offices attended by Angelo Siracusa, Larry Orman, GBA Board member Bob Mang, and others. In effect, a bargain was struck. Rather than struggling on an individual case by case basis, the GBA and the BAC found they could jointly support development or intensified land uses in some areas, which were expected to be central ones, and could jointly oppose development in peripheral open space which could be preserved as a regional greenbelt.

A key advantage of this territorial “deal” for the businessmen was that it would reduce the costly uncertainty of case-by-case battles on many proposals and many pieces of land. Environmental objections would no longer delay and complicate development projects in central zones previously agreed at the planning level to be open for development; developers, on the other hand, would not get BAC support in finagling for housing, roads and business projects in outlying areas—the frontiers of sprawl. Although entirely unofficial in the sense that no government was involved, and although land developing firms were smaller and were not members of the BAC, this was a break point in developing what may later come to be seen as a great compromise, an historic territorial division, between large business and the environmental forces. It lay at the heart of the whole Bay Vision exercise.

In late 1986 the BAC and the GBA together created an informal discussion group of a dozen or so community leaders, known as the Regional Issues Forum (RIF) to talk and work out these concepts. Another purpose of the RIF was to encourage the development of a region-wide "establishment", a group of responsible people who looked ahead on significant issues and who could talk to each other with a full Bay Area field of vision. The RIF drew energy and capacity from the extended thinking and work of both the BAC and People for Open Space/Greenbelt about the shape of the region. The BAC was focused on economic vitality and the Greenbelt side on environmental sustainability, but both had been thinking, meeting, talking and publishing on regional issues for decades. In the period around their coming together to sponsor the RIF, the BAC had launched the Bay Area Economic Forum and had published "Making Sense of the the Region's Growth". The Greenbelt side had internally debated, and then affirmed an expansion of its mission into working to shape the whole Bay Area as a sustainable, compact and city-centered metropolis, with population centers bounded by urban limit lines and surrounded by open-space "greenbelts." By itself, Greenbelt had considered the usefulness of a broad leadership forum comparable to what Bay Vision would become, and had substantially elaborated the concept in the mid-1980's. The RIF originally planned merely to hold three meetings with a handful of people, but there were more meetings than that, and a first report. A new push in the fall of 1987 with additional participants brought RIF to a point in late 1988 where it felt ready to seek not action legislation, but a “table” around which a broader range of interests could engage the regional issue. The RIF people, with the GBA's Larry Orman very active at the center of the web, were encouraged when a symposium on regionalism at the University of California at Berkeley in March of 1989 drew an excellent turnout and a high level of interest.

Independently, in the public sector, Rod Diridon, had been struck by ideas he heard in 1988 from Joseph Bodovitz, a RIF member from Marin, who spoke to a retreat of the MTC Board; Bodovitz discussed a blue-ribbon citizens’ planning exercise already going on in Southern California known as Los Angeles 2000. Bodovitz, who later advised the Los Angeles group, was drawing on his expertise as a major figure in the implementation of the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) and the California Coastal Commission (CCC). In his talk to the MTC commissioners, Bodovitz pointed
out that the Bay Area seemed to have fallen behind Southern California in thinking about metropolitan matters. In January 1989, Diridon, then the chair of the MTC, had occasion to speak to the Santa Clara Board of Supervisors on assuming its chairmanship. He suggested looking in an institutional way at the lack of coordination in regional matters, and that a blue ribbon citizen’s commission could be good for that purpose. In March of 1989, Diridon took part in the RIF’s symposium at Berkeley.

For the more extended public exercise it was considering, the RIF needed a leader who would bring visibility and credibility. The RIF sounded out Ira Michael Heyman, chancellor of the University of California at Berkeley, in mid-1989 on taking part in a public strategic planning exercise. After discussions, he responded affirmatively. Although it was not known publicly then, Heyman planned to resign from the Berkeley chancellorship in June 1990 after ten distinguished years in one of the most eminent positions in the Bay Area, where his tenure had been marked by the widening of opportunities at Berkeley for ethnic minorities, notably Asians. Before moving into senior administration on the Berkeley campus, Heyman had been a law professor specializing in land use and planning issues. He had helped out in the period of the founding of BCDC, and he had played a role in a planning compact between California and Nevada that restrained the rapid development that threatened to overwhelm the Lake Tahoe skiing and resort region of the Sierra Nevada, about a hundred and fifty miles from San Francisco. Enlisting a chairman of Heyman’s stature and highly relevant experience was a great step forward for the project.

The entirely negative attitude of the Deukmejian administration in Sacramento ruled out immediate legislative action. A deliberating commission was attractive in part because it could use the period before Deukmejian left office to lay groundwork, without immediately confronting the state government. When Diridon first heard that the RIF was moving toward a similar idea to his own, he reportedly looked upon it as a turf challenge, and there were mirror emotions on the RIF’s business/environmentalist side, as well. However, the public and the private groups began to discuss cooperative sponsorship of a citizen’s blue ribbon commission. Bob Mang, a Palo Alto small builder and Quaker, who was President of the Greenbelt Alliance and a co-chairman of the RIF at the time, but who had served on semi-public bodies with Supervisor Diridon, took part in communications between the RIF and the Supervisor.

At the organizing stage, Larry Orman acted for the RIF in discussions with Diridon. Diridon obtained the MTC Board’s consent to provide $25,000 to fund the recruitment of Bay Vision Commission members, and $150,000 of MTC funds thereafter to support the prospective activity. The exchanges between the RIF and Diridon’s MTC were not always easy; the name of the prospective commission, for example, was not a unanimous choice. Supervisor Diridon brought the catchy “Bay Vision 2020”, with its modernist, advertising-agency tone and multiple plays on words. The RIF negotiators were concerned by the pie in the sky, vaporous imaginings connotations of the word “vision”, and would have preferred a more concrete and down-to-earth name. They eventually conceded the title to Diridon as a minor matter, saying to themselves that if the project succeeded, people would remember it as the “Heyman commission.” The Bay Vision 2020 office nonetheless got telephone calls looking for an optometrist!

Despite his responsibilities on Santa Clara’s board of supervisors and the MTC, Diridon has said that he made launching Bay Vision 2020 his number one work item throughout 1989. There was progress through that year, but not without hitches in working matters out between the RIF and the local officials led by Diridon from his MTC position. Soon after an outburst of feelings, Diridon talked to the reflective Bob Mang of the Greenbelt Alliance, whom he later referred to in public as his guru, and who was to be a Bay Vision 2020 Commission and Action Coalition member. Mang suggested to Diridon that he might re-assess his approach to the RIF people. Supervisor Diridon did reconsider, and
work on building the coalition continued. Mang judged that the project had been strengthened by the spat, since it had revealed apprehensions, but more importantly, had shown the solid motivation on both sides.

Bay Vision was a three-legged stool, supported by the organizations 1) of large corporations, 2) of environmentalists, and 3) of at least nominally regionalist local officials. Angelo Siracusa for the BAC, Larry Orman for the GBA, (which came to have a proxy to represent a span of environmental groups including the Sierra Club), and Rod Diridon, in principle leading twenty-plus local officials, called themselves "convenors" to describe their founding and sponsoring roles in relation to the Bay Vision Commission. It was worked out that the Commission would sit for a year, which would allow it to have its views waiting on the desk of the new governor when he or she took office in January of 1991. Bay Vision would seek to raise a budget, for administrative support and a few studies, of about $600,000. The money was to be divided into roughly equal thirds between the public sector funding from Rod Diridon's MTC, and about $200,000 each from the large corporations (to be approached by the BAC) and from foundations (who would be approached by the environmentalists). This funding was successfully raised, although not immediately. It was spent carefully, so that funding never became a significant overt issue for the commission. The Commission took as its purpose — eventually it was printed on its letterhead — "Adopt a general vision for the Bay Area in the year 2020, and recommend specific actions necessary to make that vision a reality."

Staff came essentially from the RIF side, and primarily from the environmental component of the "trilateral" body, through engaging the California Environmental Trust for administrative support, along with its president, Joseph E. Bodovitz, as project manager. The availability of Bodovitz was a piece of luck, and choosing him as chief of the staff proved very important for the onward history of the activity, as will be discussed below.

With the major wrinkles worked out by the late summer of 1989, the primary task before the convenors was recruitment of the commission's members. From the Greenbelt Alliance's offices in downtown San Francisco which acted as the RIF's secretariat, Larry Orman wrote in May 1989 to participants in the March meeting at Berkeley and to local elected officials region-wide to say that the RIF had been working intensively with the local government (Diridon) people on "a statement of the commission and the process of activating it".

The RIF letter said that gathering candidates to sit on a civic commission had already begun, and requested nominations of "people of extremely high leadership stature, knowledge and integrity." The commission was to be representative of the geographic areas of the region, of its race and gender, and was to include community leaders from many different interests. The criteria listed for candidates were:

- Willingness to assume principal responsibility for the work of the effort
- Ability to work cooperatively with commissioners
- Demonstrated leadership in one or more proposed areas of study
- Stature within the public and/or private sector
- Commitment to attend approximately 18 Commission meetings during a one year period and to be involved in other efforts of the Commission
Ability to look beyond immediate problems

Receptivity to other points of view, and a willingness to consider all options before recommending policy choices.

Through this letter and other networking, more than 400 names were proposed for Commission seats. By agreement, the RIF winnowed the names first to about 200 and then to 68 persons. The local official convenors made the final choice of members, for a Commission of 32 persons. Rod Diridon chaired the Elected Convenor’s committee that did this; Shirley Campbell, Lionel Wilson, Mary Griffin, and Warren Hopkins were its other members. (In practice, Oakland Mayor Wilson delegated his responsibilities to Leo Bazile, an Oakland City Council Member.) The center of initiative in the final choice was Supervisor Diridon, who widely consulted other nominating committee members — and the RIF and outside leaders as well — on people from their geographical areas, or constituencies. The process of choosing members of the blue-ribbon group, and preparing for their work was laborious and long, with a dozen or so meetings and much give and take among Bodovitz, Siracusa, Orman, Diridon and ABAG Executive Director Revan Tranter. To all evidence at the Bay Vision Commission’s meetings, on a member by member basis those chosen did indeed meet the criteria of personal stature and judiciousness, representativity, and diversity.

Essentially all those chosen by this shared procedure were eager to serve, even many who were not aware beforehand that the Commission was being formed or that they had been nominated to it. Only two nominees declined, both with regrets. The very positive response suggested reassuringly that the long range concerns that had generated the Commission were widely shared by thinking Bay Area people.

The Commission had only two changes of membership from its inception in December 1989 to the last of its it phase I meetings on February 25, 1991. Pastor Ronald Swisher moved to a new church outside the region in May; his place was filled by Chester Tollette, also an African-American pastor from Richmond. Ruben Garcia, a San Jose vice president of Pacific Bell, was reassigned by his company to Southern California in September; this came late enough in the year that he was not replaced.

A list of Commission members, with mention of their backgrounds is given in the Bay Vision report in annex. Three members were designated as vice-chairs to Chancellor Heyman: Pamela Lloyd of Marin represented the northern counties. The central, San Francisco/Oakland latitude was represented by Tom Clausen; he was undoubtedly the best known member of the Commission as the just-retired chief of the Bank of America and before that of the World Bank. Richard Rios, then head of the public San Jose Development Corporation, represented the southern part of the region. In practice, Pam Lloyd attended the most regularly among the vice chairs, and she chaired meetings in the rare absence, toward the end of the cycle, of Mike Heyman.

People from various social and ethnic groups were certainly present as Commissioners, but an observer looking at the Commission as a whole would have been struck that it was entirely drawn from the region’s middle and upper classes by education and social status. There were no firebrands, and the middle class character of the group went some way to explain the unfailing courtesy and decorum of its meetings. By comparison with the general population, it was a very “white bread” operation. Moreover, the ability of a commissioner to represent an ethnic group, or even a locality, could have been considered diluted by the fact that he or she had been invited onto the Commission by the convenors, not named by an ethnic or local organization. A given commissioner was of Asian descent, for example, but it was never explicit how much he or she spoke as an individual, or how much he
represented --and could therefore be expected to "bring along"-- an Asian constituency, or indeed a geographic or a business constituency. Project Manager Bodovitz asserts that the Commission's membership was chosen for its diversity, which was an approximation of the geographic, occupational and ethnic diversity of the region, but that when commissioners spoke, it was as individuals; they were never asked to represent groups.

In practice, the commissioners varied considerably in how much they thought of themselves as individuals, or alternatively considered themselves representatives of an external group. Mary Handel made explicit that her remarks were often based on consultations with people in agriculture, or in her county of Napa. An Asian commissioner holding a senior position with a large corporation spoke little, and when she did so, it was as a business-person rather than an Asian, but Gordon Chin, it was clearly understood by the group as a whole, often raised specifically Asian or ethnic minority concerns, and very usefully so. Aileen Hernandez often highlighted what sort of attention or provisions the region's ethnic minorities in general, or African-Americans in particular, would need to support regionalism. It seemed clearly recognized that in doing this, she was making a particularly useful contribution. At least partly because Ms. Hernandez did play an explicitly ethnic representative role, as did others such as Oakland councilman and convenor, Leo Bazile, the Bay Vision report was notably well supported by African-American leaders when it reached Sacramento, despite the widespread view that increases in regional authority will tend to erode the power of ethnic urban leaders. When commissioners did not take it upon themselves to "represent" the locality or segment of society from which they came, the Commission later found itself on thinner ice with that constituency in the legislative process.

At the behest of Rod Diridon, the Commission had no members who were current elected public officials, although the BAC and the GBA wanted to include some office-holders. In Diridon's view, to preserve the commission's long-range outlook and its freedom of action, the members of the Commission should all be private citizens, unburdened by the responsibility and constraints of elective office. Under his impetus, the Commission's task was defined as one which current local officeholders recognized they could not handle, because they were seen as limited to a short time range and a narrow perspective by the pressure of the local electorates which they must satisfy to remain in office. This approach also avoided the problem of picking particular office-holders to sit on the commission, which could have been contentious and time-consuming.

The absence of local office-holders was an important point in the construction of the Commission. Everyone knew that the sitting locally elected officials (LEOs) of the Bay Area's nine counties and 100 cities, taken as a body, would be an important, and perhaps even the decisive audience for the commission's recommendations. Later, the percentage of seats for LEOs on the Bay Area Regional Commission which was proposed by Bay Vision became one of the most vexed issues the Bay Vision exercise dealt with. It had also been a key sticking point in Assembyman John Knox's effort to construct a regional body in the 1970's.

LEOs opposed to the Bay Vision report later reproached the body for its lack of officeholding members. They asserted that people elected to local offices were democratically "responsible to the public" in a way that unelected people were not, and secondly, that working elected leaders grasped the realities of local government in a way that others could not. Both points, of course, were entirely debatable: A LEO from Hayward serving on a regional body is responsible to (that is, dis-electable by) his constituency in Hayward, but has no such "responsibility" to the people of other cities affected by his actions on the regional board. On the second point, the Diridon local convenors group, itself made up of LEOs, held that the LEOs were so immersed in present realities that they were incapable of changing and improving the way the game was played.
Bay Vision itself was a compensatory mechanism created outside the political circuit to perform a task that regular politics were not getting done. The choice to be an entirely "civilian" body did tend to free it beneficially at the conceptual level from the constraints of the status quo. But the output of Bay Vision would necessarily return to political channels, that is to the state legislature, for enactment into law. If Bay Vision had incorporated several strong local office-holders who could have assuaged the fears of their elected colleagues, it clearly would have helped sell the product later. How far to step away from normal enfranchised politics and from the body of office-holders was an important judgment. It is one worth considerable thought by those who may wish to mount something similar to Bay Vision in another region.

As it got underway, the members of the Commission understood well that they were making a fresh run at an old problem. Efforts by enlightened citizens to think of the settlements around San Francisco Bay as an interdependent region go back at least to the "Greater San Francisco" movement of 1906-07, soon after the great earthquake and fire. Its proposals were modeled on New York's borough system, which had brought Brooklyn and the Bronx under the sway of Manhattan in 1898. The effort here was seen as a bid for domination by San Francisco, and Oakland militantly resisted it. The "Greater San Francisco" episode sharpened rivalrous attitudes that have cut a wide swath ever since; it contributed to the failure of San Francisco and the East Bay to cooperate on the massive dams and canal systems from the Sierra Nevada that each built independently to provide itself with water in the 1920's.

But since then there has been a steady background level of effort, more among activist private citizens and voluntary groups than public officials, to stress the advantages of a regional approach to building infrastructure and planning land use. At the same time the profession and practice of city planning was making headway in the Bay Area's city and county governments. With major federal and state funding and participation, many regional projects were carried out with de facto cooperation for a period of time (i.e., until the successful "freeway revolts" which began in the 1960s), notably the pre-war great bridges and portions of the post-war freeway system.

There was under discussion in 1959-60 a Golden Gate Authority to combine management of the region's bridges, harbors and airports; it eventually failed in the legislature. At the beginning of the 1960s, Governor Pat Brown's Commission on Metropolitan Area Problems proposed state legislation to allow any metropolitan area in California to create a single, multi-purpose regional district to carry out the will of a council of regionally elected officials. But Brown's proposal, which was never passed by the Legislature, was beaten to the starting line in the Bay Area by a convention of local government officials who feared encroachment on their powers by a such a district. The local leaders urged a much looser, voluntary council of governments with merely advisory powers, which would concern itself with subjects such as water pollution, building code standardization, and advisory planning. This body, known as the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), came into existence in 1961 under the weak form of a joint powers agreement among governments ranging in size from that of San Francisco to villages of less than 5000 people. Its board members were all elected officials of the localities. Although at its beginnings ABAG was a national leader by virtue of its interest in advisory regional planning, its board considered ABAG a meeting place of the local governments rather than an organization responsive directly to Bay Area residents—they called their full meetings "General Assemblies" to convey that, as in the U.N., there was no pooling of "sovereignty."

Since its founding in 1961, ABAG has enjoyed federal and state recognition as the Bay Area's council of governments (COG), but its smaller members predominate in its affairs, and it can appeal only for voluntary cooperation from its members. The founders of ABAG created it not as an agency
desired for itself, but as a defense against Sacramento’s proposal for authoritative regional planning with force of law. To this day it has a stepchild air.

In the last thirty years an array of organizations with geographically Bay Area-wide authority has arisen, but each is specialized for a single function: the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (Air Board) is a classic example. Years of citizen effort produced another single function agency, the environmentally-oriented Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC). Probably the most important single purpose agency for policy formation is the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), which has very substantial clout because federal and state money for both highways and mass transit come to the Bay Area through it. But a comprehensive (as opposed to single-function), and authoritative (as opposed to voluntary), regional agency has remained an unachieved grail in this fierce Balkan territory.

II. LOOKING AT THE COMMISSION’S PROCESS

The Commission Meets

The Bay Vision 2020 Commission’s inaugural meeting took place on December 14, 1989. Like almost all of those to come, it was in the modernistic MetroCenter building in Oakland. Central to the region and conveniently opposite the Lake Merritt BART stop, MetroCenter houses two of the existing regional special-purpose agencies, ABAG and MTC and some BART offices. An alternative would have been to meet at numerous locations around the region, which is about 150 miles north to south and fifty miles east to west, but this was not tried. Commissioners from near the center benefitted; those from Napa and Santa Clara did a lot of traveling. The first Bay Vision session was a joint one with the convenors (Orman, Siracusa, and about a dozen local officials led by Diridon). In brief remarks before collectively passing the baton to the new Bay Vision 2020 Commissioners, each convenor expressed his or her reasons for convoking the blue ribbon group and wished its members well.

After taking their seats around the wide horseshoe table, the members of the new group in turn explained why they had agreed to serve. Many spoke of the potential of the Commission to be a significant historical turning point. There were references to the re-organization of Europe then going on after the dismantling of the Berlin wall, and to the United States’ Constitutional Convention of 1789, in which loose bonds were strengthened. To express the long-term perspective, many commissioners mentioned a desire to improve the future of their children and grandchildren. The most recurrent note was the need to challenge deteriorating trends in education, the economy and the environment in order to preserve the beauty and the special qualities of the San Francisco Bay region; several members pointedly spoke of stopping “Los Angelization”.

After introducing themselves, Chancellor Heyman and Project Manager Bodovitz said that scheduling the project as one year’s work was intended to limit it to a reasonable time commitment for the people serving on the commission. Moreover, a report produced after a year’s discussion and consensus building could be waiting on the desk of the new governor of California who would be inaugurated in January 1991.

The Commission’s next meeting was an organizational and internal administration one, on January 11, 1990. Accepting the proposals of Joe Bodovitz, who had consulted a few days earlier with Mike Heyman, it was agreed that the group would meet twice a month on Monday afternoons. The sessions for the first several months would be devoted primarily to the acquisition of expertise. External speakers were announced for the next several sessions; those who spoke over the entire year
are listed in the Bay Vision report (in annex). They included the directors of the three main Bay Area specialized regional agencies, an expert on the present and future ethnic makeup of the population and on the experiences of Oregon, Florida and London, England, respectively. Other speakers discussed current regionalist efforts in Los Angeles, demographic and ethnic trends, water management, and the needs of inner city populations. A two-meeting presentation by the Institute of Governmental Studies at UC Berkeley covered political structuring. In the course of the commission's work, all three constituent convenors appeared in a speaking role: the BAC's Angelo Siracusa (with Mike McGill of the Bay Area Economic Forum) talked on the demands of the regional economy, while the Greenbelt Alliance's Larry Orman discussed the imperatives of planning, and Rod Diridon spoke on his prescriptions for the region.

At this initial organizing meeting, Joe Bodovitz distributed the report of the roughly parallel Los Angeles 2000 group, which he continued to serve as an occasional advisor. The carefully worked out and lavishly printed Los Angeles recommendations, he said, had made a splash at the moment of their publication, but had rapidly faded from public attention. Bodovitz pointed out that the LA 2000 commission, longer in duration, larger in membership, and more shifting in composition over time than Bay Vision planned to be, had divided its work into five subjects, with a separate committee to look into each. Members with backgrounds in particular subjects, such as transportation or education, had gravitated to those committees, and the result was closer to five separate thematic reports than a single agreed and integrated view from the committee as a whole. Bodovitz believed, with the evident agreement of Mike Heyman, that this was a major weakness of the Los Angeles exercise. Bodovitz proposed, with no dissent from the new commissioners, that Bay Vision avoid dividing up into committees, and work always in a body of the whole, which it did.

Joe Bodovitz went on to suggest as a proposed architecture of its task that the Commission could consider three broad paths for the Bay Area's future: 1) the continuation of current growth trends of geographic outpush and reliance on the single family suburban house and the car, 2) "city-centered growth" with emphasis on the three major cities of San Francisco, San Jose, and Oakland, or 3) a more multi-centered urban growth divided among a set of secondary cities, such as Fremont, Santa Rosa and Walnut Creek, as well as the traditional three centers. If the Commission agreed that continuation of the status quo was the best course, Bodovitz pointed out, no changes or new action would be necessary; if not, the steps required to produce a change of course would need to be considered.

Excepting only this organizational meeting, the biweekly Monday afternoon meetings were open to the public, and there were typically twenty or so visitors, observers or journalists present. By ground rule, non-members did not ask questions or take part in the discussion. Attendance by commissioners themselves was remarkably good; it averaged twenty-five members or so for a long pull.

Finding a consensus position, versus building consensus for a known position.

From this beginning, and strengthening as the exercise moved onward, certain chosen approaches to the work could be perceived among the Commission members and the leadership of Heyman and Bodovitz.

The first choice went back to the most basic conceptualization of the project. The challenge was to devise a realizable alternative to the regional sprawl that was blighting the Bay Area economy and environment. For the convenors, a plausible approach could have been to turn for a vision to experts in city planning, or even to seek people who combined city planning expertise with the particular flair and creativity associated with the greatest architects, as Daniel Burnham had been brought to San Francisco in an earlier day, or as I.M. Pei's firm did the first design of mega-
development Mission Bay in San Francisco. Conceivably there could have been a competition for a physical vision of the future city, as there was for the design of the Berkeley campus of the University of California in the nineteenth century. Any variant of this approach could have produced a dramatic, relatively concrete and actually visualizable "vision". The excitement such a vision can generate would then have been the basis for seeking public support for it and for the steps to get it underway.

The alternative chosen by the convenors was less of a picture and more of a process, and in a sense, was more democratic: Let's assemble a reasonable sample of the thinking population, and ask it what it wants and how it thinks its goals can be obtained.

Once launched on this path, the keynote was finding and elaborating the consensus among the thirty two commissioners; not seeking the best thirty year line of development for the Bay Area according to an abstract definition, nor finding the program that would best satisfy experts in urban affairs, and even less working out a future that would explicitly fulfill the agenda of a particular social group or political outlook. Rather, it was to be the future that could obtain the widest endorsement among a representative group of citizens. Breadth of acceptance was to be the primary recommendation of the vision, and the key to its realizability. It was understood that the antidote to sprawl and congestion lay in the general direction of "city-centered growth". A central question was how far in that direction would a consensus reach, but the first rule was to accept whatever consensus emerged from a carefully balanced set of responsible members of the community.

In an ideal consensus, everyone agrees. Inevitably, the actual rule on the search for consensus was in two respects a good deal softer than "everyone must agree". With regard to the first, Project Manager Bodovitz said in retrospect that if there had been one or two commissioners, or even a few more than that, who wanted to register dissenting views or to withdraw from the report, the situation would still have been within his conception of consensus. But if the group had split into two major segments whose views could not be resolved, Bodovitz said he would have judged that no consensus existed. This latter formation certainly did not take place, and in fact, there were no minority reports, or dissenting "footnotes" in the final report.

Secondly, for certain issues (usually general ones raised in a very general way) the final report could indicate that while the issue was considered important, there was not agreement by all members on it. This understanding, stated several times in the discussions and set out explicitly in the text of the report, functioned helpfully to ease constraints on agreement. A given commissioner need not fight to the last ditch on each point as if he or she were to take full personal responsibility for it, since an "out" was provided in the statement that not all commissioners agreed with every finding in the report.

The primary mechanism for deciding what was consensual and what was not, was the informed and generally sensitive judgment of the Heyman/Bodovitz leadership. They had delicate antennae for the responses of the individual commissioners to various lines of thinking and for the likely responses of the constituencies of various commissioners as well. The leaders were careful to guide a retreat in a particular discussion rather than let it go too deep into subjects that could be seriously divisive. Similarly, they signaled discretion where it could be imagined that the report would put itself on a side opposite from the eventual majority view, either in the public at large or the legislature. This was a manifestation of the leadership's firm pragmatic, rather than visionary, orientation.

The search for consensus, the effort to find and elaborate what could be agreed upon rather than to bring to light topics that were important but would lead to disagreement, was thoroughly explicit throughout the exercise. Joe Bodovitz reiterated and explained it numerous times during meetings. As a broad strategy it itself had what could fairly be described as consensus acceptance among the
Commission members. But at the same time, the continual highlighting of what was agreed upon, and the muting of disagreement, had a systematically reductionist effect on the depth and sharpness of the commission's deliberations. Willingness to criticize the status quo, to praise and blame, to assign responsibility, and to look far into the future, were all diminished.

Under the rubric of consensus, the general pattern of conflict avoidance (rather than confrontation and resolution of differences) had the major success that everyone on the Commission was in fact kept on board behind the report. But it also had the major effect that rather than state how the problems of the Bay Area should be solved, the Commission retreated to a proposal that another body should be created which in turn would devise and apply the actual solutions. While its report undoubtedly points out general directions to be aimed at, the Commission went from the mission of envisioning and calling for specific solutions to limiting itself to stage one of a slow paced gradualism: calling for the creation of a new instrument which would discover and apply solutions.

Within the commission, this was a weakening, and a postponement of decisions, in the name of pragmatism and consensus-seeking; it was characterized as a passing of the buck by some commissioners, and it was undoubtedly a policy of starting reform with the thin edge of a wedge. In the view of the Commission's leaders, such restraint was necessary and realistic. They actively — and correctly — anticipated resistance from current local office holders to any perceived dilution of local government powers. Behind that prospective antipathy to reform, Heyman and Bodovitz were aware, was the power of the status quo in the region's culture, and the resistance of the culture to urban housing density, to the residential mixing of social and ethnic groups, and to taxation for public planning and investment. They knew well what UC Berkele's Peter Hall described as the "multiplicity of sorry stories and failed opportunities" in the past, notably the five unsuccessful efforts of John Knox "to find a compromise formula that satisfied all the diverse interests involved." The leadership's judgment was that to propose too much almost certainly would lead to the rejection or ignoring of the commission's work, as Joe Bodovitz felt had happened to the LA 2000 report. The leaders therefore tended to restrain the consensus of the group, rather than to push it toward more ambitious and risky proposals.

Both sides of this were put squarely in the May 1991 symposium published on May 12 by the San Jose Mercury News:

Rob Elder (Mercury News Editor): "The final draft of BV2020 seems to me to really shy away from the land use question. It doesn't come down hard on a veto (to prevent development), and it certainly doesn't come anywhere near saying a regional agency has a mandate to require development of any sort. It also shies away from revenue sharing....Did you just not think you could pass it with controversial things in it? And if not, how are they going to be in it four years from now?"

Joe Bodovitz: "The Commission as a whole was not suicidal....And this was a diverse Commission (with disagreement on some key questions.)"  

For people considering initiatives like Bay Vision for other regions, the implication of this paper, like the implication of Rob Elder's question above, is that Bay Vision should have been bolder, spoken in a higher tone, sought a sharper profile, and asked for faster, and more specific changes in the way the region lives. In the writer's view, such variations are largely stylistic ones. As the Chinese might say, it doesn't really matter whether a cat is daring or is cautious, as long as it catches mice. The reader, moreover, will find that the polarity on this subject matter underwent several later changes which will be discussed below: Bay Vision's recommendations in the end were too "strong" for easy
passage in the legislature, but it was the call for a new forum, rather than the substantive prescriptions, which raised the greatest external resistance.

The battle depends on the terrain

Where were the pitfalls and the threats to the proposals for reform? There were essentially two possible routes through the maze, and both had been considered in the past.

One path was to take on the defenders of the status quo in some form of a popular electoral plebiscite. This meant trying to reach the general public, and would be heavily dependent on the role played by the mass media. Since there is no region-wide public office in which the issues could be personified by an attractive candidate or slate of candidates, going to the people in California means a ballot proposal. Environmentalist reform for the California coast had been driven forward by a successful ballot initiative. It was a way of going around the politicians, and many people thought that on regionalism, the "people" were ahead of the politicians. The BAC/KQED poll done annually by the Field organization generally supported that view, and the 1991 Bay Area League of Women Voters polling confirmed it. Elected officials were likely to react more negatively to regional governance proposals than the general public because the existing power of the officials was directly threatened by new arrangements, a threat which did not affect ordinary citizens in the same way. But in the 1970s Knox period, the proponents of regional government had rejected the ballot initiative route out of a mixture of distaste for the oversimplifications and vulgarities of the process, lack of funds, and a belief that they would lose a ballot contest. "We were afraid we would get demagogued to death," says John Knox today, implying that even now he would not reverse his decision to avoid a plebiscite. At the same time Knox believes his bill might well have succeeded in the state Senate, where it failed by two votes in 1974, if he had agreed to hold a popular vote to approve regionalist reforms.

The second route, directly to the state legislature, seemed to be the dominant conception from the beginning. The timing of the Commission's sessions alongside the 1990 year of election campaigns for a successor to Governor Deukmejian was an important element in how the Commission saw its own position on the political map. That calendar reflected the Commission's conception that its work was essentially aimed at the state capitol in Sacramento. That was strengthened by the appearance of former Assemblyman John Knox as the first outside speaker to the body; Knox had led the series of unsuccessful fights for a regional government in the 1960s and 1970s. The issue of regional government for the Bay Area had not been significantly raised since then. Neil Peirce, an expert on urbanism across the United States, confirmed the view that obtaining state-level legislation was the key test for the realization of the Commission's vision.

The climate in the California legislature for metropolitan reform looked better in 1990 than in the Knox period. Southern California, with its heavy demographic preponderance, had opposed regionalist authority in the 1970s even in a Northern part of the state for fear of setting a precedent unwanted in the south. But by the late 1980s regionalist steps had been taken in San Diego, and the Los Angeles region was building mass transit and doing more planning, pressed hard by air pollution and stringent national and state air quality laws.

UC Berkeley political scientist Eugene Lee summed it up for the Commission in a September 1990 meeting: the critical goal is "41/21/1". This meant forty-one votes in the eighty-member state assembly, twenty-one votes in the forty-member state senate, plus the signature of the governor.

This did not lead to immediate head counting among Bay Area members of the senate and assembly, nor among the full bodies. Growth management in general was a recognized, but not front
burner, issue in Sacramento. By the Spring of 1990, moreover, the legislature already had growth management bills before it proposed by members of both parties, including one by Democrat Willie Brown, powerful and controversial Speaker of the Assembly. In the last days of the Deukmejian Administration, an extensive fact-gathering, review and consultation effort by legislative staff working for Democratic assembly and senate majorities, generally reformist in tone, was going on in this field in Sacramento as well. Bay Area legislators were doubtless aware of the Bay Vision work, but not as a pressing matter, or one of active involvement for any of them in the course of 1990.

Consensus building: Should the Commission primarily talk among itself, or should it listen to external experts?

Some members expressed uneasiness at the length of the prospective series of expert presentations. They wondered whether the Commission would have enough time for discussion among its own members, and for drafting and coming to agreement on its report in the latter part of the year. Joe Bodovitz replied that the learning and fact-gathering phase would be finished at the latest by Labor Day, allowing at least the autumn for deliberations and report preparation. He pointed out that the Commission members ranged greatly in expertise from lifetime experts, such as David Nichols, who had successively been the professional manager of two Bay Area counties, to people who were getting into the subject for the first time. They must acquire a common base of knowledge to be equipped to proceed in unison in the deliberative phase, Bodovitz believed. There would be questions and discussion with each expert presenter, of course. The Commission also sponsored two significant research papers, by Richard LeGates of San Francisco State University on housing, and by Scott McCreary of the Center for Environmental Design Research at the University of California at Berkeley, on the effects of population growth on natural resources (water air and land). It also had brief papers written on respectively the African-American, Asian and Hispanic communities by Edward J. Blakeley, L. Ling-chi Wang, and Alex Saragoza, all of UC Berkeley.

Joe Bodovitz did not want Commission members to take positions on issues prematurely, especially conflicting positions. This was central to the process management methods he had drawn from his earlier experiences with the Bay Conservation and Coastal Commissions. He hoped for a suspension of the articulation of opinions, especially contentious ones, during an extended learning period. By the time personal or constituency positions were expressed, he intended, a good many of the rougher edges would be smoothed off and a reasonable amount of consensus would have been achieved by the members' common exposure to the subject from the set of expert speakers. In his view, if commissioners suspended judgment until they had a shared knowledge of the field and of each other, there would be less need for deal-making among constituency spokesmen, or for backing down from fixed positions, which would make a consensus report more difficult.

Bodovitz could joke that the stage of heaving furniture would come, and even should come, in a group chosen for its diversity, but in fact the proceedings of the Bay Vision Commission were extremely decorous and non-adversarial in tone from beginning to end. With very rare exceptions, (perhaps David Martin on water agencies, and Dwight Steele on various social welfare goals) no one stated positions so sharply that they clearly had to be swallowed later. Nor was there ever an explicit proposal to horse-trade. In thirty-plus meetings, there was the very occasional sharp remark, but never an extended acrimonious exchange. Discussion had very rounded edges and much geniality and mutual face-saving throughout. A remark made at a meeting that elicited interest and general support from the group would lead to expressions of agreement or elaborations of that topic. A remark that did not find support was only rarely directly rebutted by another commissioner; more usually it was just not pursued in the flow of the meeting and discussion moved elsewhere. With very few exceptions, the Commission never resolved differences by a vote, even a straw vote. Rather, it used extended
discussion (often coming back repeatedly to a point over many meetings), supple drafting, and in several cases it recognized in the text that a point raised disagreement.

This peacefulness and civility clearly reflected the consensus-oriented style and choices of Joe Bodovitz. The long period of listening together to outside experts was one of the conflict-suppression strategies that brought about the collegial atmosphere. It did produce a consensual report and a congenial tone throughout the Commission's life, but, as discussed above, it ran the risk of a more limited and shallower consensus than might otherwise have been achieved, and a thinner emotional engagement of commissioners with the work. The Commission was later criticized for artful dodging, for having in fact made few decisions, and even fewer tough substantive decisions, choosing rather to push the difficult matters onto the plate of the interim regional body it was creating. A more grappling, frank and conflict-accepting style within the Commission itself might have produced less postponement and displacement of decisional work to the consolidated regional body that the Commission proposed. But more to the point, the leadership's policy of deferring the more assertive and risky stands was designed to minimize possible objections and to help legislative passage of the reforms. It almost certainly did make a positive contribution in that regard.

Another process alternative: Should the Commission focus on developing its "vision", or on "getting results"?

A second perennial dividing line within the Commission was not a sharply delineated one, and in no way surprising. It lay between those eager to work out a shared picture of what the Bay Area could be like in thirty years and who took this as the most important, part of the Commission's charge (who in shorthand could be called "visionists"), and the other Commissioners who wanted the analysis and recommendations of the group to be concrete, realistic, and have a good chance to be put into practice in the proximate future ("pragmatists").

In general, those most dissatisfied with the present social picture and with ambitions to ameliorate it in the city of the future, gravitated toward the first pole, notably Dwight Steele, Lynette Lee, Alleen Hernandez, Martin Paley, Bob Mang, and Martin Rosen. Elaborating a vision also appealed, though to a lesser extent, to some of the environmentalists. The vision outlook by no means attracted all the commissioners from minority ethnic backgrounds, and it seemed to have low appeal for the businesspeople. Many commissioners thought that developing an overly wishful, utopian vision of a desired Bay Area of the future would discredit the commission's work and alienate potential supporters for moderate reformist steps. But lawyer and veteran Sierra Club activist Dwight Steele looked at it from the other end: he held that nothing except an exciting and positive vision of a goal-region would attract the interest of the public at large and give the population a broad and emotionally adequate motivation to support technical and tedious incremental reforms in governance.

The pragmatists were a majority and firmly in charge. Chairman Heyman saw little need to elaborate at any length what was wrong with the status quo or to dilate on what should be sought in the future; he considered those matters obvious, and too much discussion of them to be a distraction from the real work. Joe Bodovitz clearly wanted to avoid blue sky utopianizing, and particularly to stay away from calls for major social change, such as reduced income differences, in the regional city of the future. It was accepted as taboo on all sides to speak directly of changes that would mean substantially increased taxes, which were tacitly regarded as an impossibility. Nonetheless, after the couple of occasions when the "visionaries" on the Commission requested breaks in the series of outside speakers in order to hold discussions purely among Commission members about their own fears and hopes, Heyman allowed that he was surprised by what emerged. He said from the chair that he greatly
valued those sessions. During them, and from time to time in the regular Commission sessions as well, there were moments of civic dialogue that glowed with human excellence.

**Shifting the focus from the "vision" and substantive changes toward creating a new regional level forum for change**

Early on, a brief memo was sent in by three South Bay members, Peter Giles, Yvette del Prado and Gerry Steinberg, who could not be present for a particular day’s discussion. They asserted that the Commission was "not charged with developing a vision of the Bay Area and fashioning a structure to implement that vision. We are charged with developing a structure and a process whereby duly appointed and elected representatives of the people of the Bay Area can better cooperate in developing and updating a vision." Other commissioners, such as Glen Larner of IBM, backed this view. Larner said that he did not feel empowered to make actual decisions for the future residents of the region, but did believe that it was the commission’s mandate to create an instrument through which the region could deal with the unforeseeable problems of any future period.

This appeared to coincide with the outlook of Chairman Heyman and Project Manager Bodovitz, and the center of gravity of the group moved steadily toward putting creation of the regional decisional and planning body ahead of advocating specific changes or investments. Mike Heyman explicitly manifested interest in working out the specifics of a regional political process, and getting it established, rather than predicting or determining the outcomes of that process. He spoke eloquently of the creation of a new and needed regional level political forum. In addition to familiar issues, it would attract emerging issues, and serve creatively for the articulation, management and resolution of old and new problems.

Some commissioners, such as Dwight Steele, thought this was a form of capitulation, but as the late summer and early fall sessions went by, the format of the commission’s report came to be seen as having two parts: 1) a statement of vision, which proved to be mild and unexceptionable, and 2) a call for a new form of multipurpose regional governance. Later, the group decided to lead off with a statement of its "findings". In the final report the findings bulked quite large, and were effective material, although originally they were seen as routine and as less important support for the vision and the governance recommendations. In the mind of the commission, the real stress was on the call to create a significant new governmental forum and planning authority for the region as a whole. This was seen as an essential pre-requisite for reducing traffic congestion and saving open space.

**Drafting the vision section elicited two major issues:**

1) Should it be recognized, as called for by some environmentally and agriculturally oriented commissioners, that eventually a "carrying capacity" limit for the Bay Area’s population would be reached? Should the region contemplate an eventual end of growth in numbers of people? This view was raised, essentially as a minority one, in the final text, after it became clear that several of the businessmen, members from ethnic minorities and other commissioners would not countenance the notion of a growth ceiling or region-wide no-growth policies. Most members doubted that such policies could be made effective, even if desirable. Interestingly, eminent law professor Mike Heyman, replying to a call-in questioner on local public radio during the commission’s work, knocked cold the notion of a growth-stopping exclusionist policy by observing that it could not be done within the U.S. Constitution. But in the chair of Commission meetings, Heyman never interrupted discussion that led in that direction, gingerly as such talk always was.
2) Should greater attention be given to the needs and aspirations of ethnic minorities? A significant push in this direction for the vision text was offered by Gordon Chin in a September 19 memo and urged by Aileen Hernandez. It was accepted with alacrity, almost apologetically, by the Commission as a whole (although the memo's call for stress on economic as well as racial integration elicited less response).

But the majority of the commission, as well as the leadership, agreed with Peter Giles and Glen Larmerd, and probably had done so from before the commission's creation. The increased focus on creating a more unified forum for regional governance, rather than on elaborating a detailed or assertive vision of the future, or deciding among substantive directions such as the various kinds of city-centered growth, cast the Bay Vision ever more squarely as a new run at the Knox regional government agenda of the early 1970s. The selection of UC Berkeley's Institute of Governmental Studies (IGS) as consultant on political structures was a link with the Knox efforts. In the Commission's 1991 phase, attention turned firmly toward arrangements for regional governance.

**Staff/Commission member balance**

The relationship between its official membership and its paid staff is always an important process aspect of such a commission. Staff members can be quietly responsible not only for the words of a commission's report, but for its ideas and for the outcome of key turning points in its deliberations. What about Bay Vision 2020?

The staff, for the most part in the person of Joe Bodovitz, was very, very strong. Uneasiness at excessive influence and even about a stifling effect on the proceedings by Bodovitz was present at moments in the minds of certain commissioners, probably a minority of them. Particularly the commissioners who wanted to talk at length about their vision of the future chafed at the long series of didactic, and essentially introductory-level technical meetings with external speakers. When, in response to these objections, meetings were held for purely internal discussion, those sessions were considered very rewarding and successful. But the people who had expressed impatience at listening to outsiders were not always those who spoke their own minds with the greatest preparation and effect in intra-Commission sessions.

Joe Bodovitz was backed on the staff by Mel Mogulof, a retired Urban Institute expert on metropolitan governance, whom Chairman Heyman had contacted about the project. Mogulof did most of the actual drafting, but under the active and decisive supervision of Bodovitz. Within the staff offices, Bodovitz often rejected texts and sent others back for re-working; Mogulof drafted to his requirements, and the minutes of meetings and other texts, including the successive drafts of what became the report, reflected Bodovitz's desires. Tish Sprague, a lawyer and Vice President of the California Environmental Trust, provided budget management work and many facilitations, but only rarely took a substantive role. Clerical support was provided by Maria Villareal, and, with a special foundation grant, liaison with ethnic minority communities was done by Justine Choy. Joe Bodovitz directed the entire staff strongly, so that discussion of the staff/commission relationship really becomes a discussion of the role of the project manager.

Joseph E. Bodovitz, had first passed through San Francisco en route to naval service in the Korean War. He had returned to settle as a journalist, covering planning and local government issues for the San Francisco Examiner, and then working for a period for the San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association (SPUR). In 1964, he staffed a four-month commission set up by Sen. Eugene McAteer to study San Francisco Bay in response to the campaign of the Save the Bay Association led by Katherine Kerr, Sylvia McLaughlin, and Esther Gulick. This study proved to be a
preliminary to the 1965 legislation that created the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) and launched it on a three year planning and trial period. Bodovitz became the Executive Director of BCDC, serving in that role through 1972, including the BCDC's successful return to the Legislature in 1969 for re-approval and full-fledged institutionalization. His was a significant part in a large achievement; Larry Orman fairly characterized the accomplishment of Save the Bay and BCDC as "turning San Francisco Bay from a piece of real estate into a resource for everyone." Commission member Peter Giles later said essentially the same thing: "I think about when I was in high school in 1961 or so, reading about an organization called Save the Bay. This weekend, flying a kite with my daughter in the baylands, I couldn't help but reflect on the vision of those people...."  

In 1972, after experiencing frustration in the Legislature, environmentalists mounted a statewide ballot initiative drive for a public commission and a set of rules to protect the varied and beautiful coast of California, then shielded only feebly by local community controls from headlong privatization and development. Proposition 20 passed with 55.1% support in November 1972. Thereafter, the Coastal Commission followed a path like BCDC's: a provisional mandate of four years in which it exercised certain regulatory powers, but was also charged with drawing up a design for the protection of the coast and for a permanent commission. It went to the back to the legislature for ratification in 1976, which after intense struggle was approved. Bodovitz served as the California Coastal Commission's first executive director from 1973 to 1978, and went on to be executive director of the State Public Utilities Commission from 1979 to 1986. He then became president of the California Environmental Trust (CET), a small tax-exempt organization that administered assets won for environmental purposes by the successful outcome of environmentally-brought court cases. The Chairman of CET is one of the Bay Area's most eminent figures, Mel Lane, of the Peninsula family that created Sunset Magazine, a RIF member, and long a supporter of environmentalism. Mel Lane had been the inaugural chairman of both BCDC and the Coastal Commission, and he was to be a member of the Bay Vision 2020 Commission as well.

Joe Bodovitz had joined the RIF meetings in the second set of recruitments in 1987, and when the idea of a blue ribbon commission on the future of the region arose in the RIF, it was logical from the beginning that administrative support and budgetary management could well be provided by him and the CET. The CET organization also brought a small but centrally located office on Market Street in San Francisco.

Bodovitz's contribution was based on three elements:

1) His extensive and extraordinary background in the similar and successful BCDC and Coastal Commission efforts, and his long, high-level experience and connections developed as executive director of the California Public Utilities Commission. He tended to pull Bay Vision toward the precedent of beginning with a provisional interim commission; this was the sequence that had been followed successfully by BCDC and the Coastal Commission. He contributed to the group's emphasis on creating a product that would be made law in Sacramento rather than elaborating a vision. Both of these were plausible directions to be judged by their results; neither was substantively and squarely opposed by any commissioner, and certainly not by the Commission members as group.

2) Bodovitz was strongly bonded with Chairman Mike Heyman. Heyman told the Commission early on that one of the reasons he accepted the chairmanship was that he knew Joe Bodovitz would be the project manager. Heyman shared experience with Bodovitz on BCDC (as he put it at a meeting, he then had been "working for Joe"), and they were aware of each other's activity on the Coastal Commission and the Lake Tahoe regional reforms. They were clearly personally on a good wavelength with each other, and started with the same basic conception of the region's needs. The two
consulted each other adequately, and had roughly the same balance between idealism and pragmatism. Tall and genially olympian, Heyman gave Bodovitz charge over a wide range of sub-topics, and turned to him frequently in public and private to make use of his experience and grasp of detail. He gave Bodovitz an extensive speaking role at Commission meetings.

3) In addition to his extraordinarily relevant experience, and his relationship with the Chairman, Joe Bodovitz brought formidable resources of personal capacity. He combined a preference for understatement, and for working outside the spotlight, with a personal commitment to bring about reforms that he considered important, a commitment and an ambition that was much stronger than his surface of ironic humor and diffidence often let show. Under his conflict-deflecting courtesy there was also a healthy decisiveness and willingness to exert power. The commission's definition of its job as drawing consensus from the variegation of its members' backgrounds, appeared to come from Bodovitz, and Bay Vision's chariness of moving toward a popular vote on regionalist proposals also came significantly from him. Although sociable and open to discussion, he was old enough to have limits on his flexibility, and was tougher at the core than his manner conveyed. He never had direct confrontations with Commission members, and he often made his points by silently or self-deprecatingly sticking with them and waiting out people who wanted to make other points. Especially in a system of steady informal summarizing and synthesizing rather than vote-taking, it was primarily in Bodovitz head, certainly in consultation with Heyman, that the basic filtration took place of what was said in the Commission meetings into the successive draft versions of the report. It was this, at the end, that represented the Commission's consensus. His role was very important, indeed.

Bodovitz's influence was also strengthened, as staff influence inevitably is, by being in continuous action rather than having a member's intermittent concern on the occasions primarily of the meetings. The customary concept of a staff which is subordinate in capacities and responsibilities to commission members did not apply in this case. This was humorously reflected in a vagueness about Joe Bodovitz's title that was mentioned more than once by Mike Heyman; the normal one would have been executive director, but Bodovitz never actually used that; he was sometimes referred to as project consultant, while he showed on the letterhead, grouped with the Commission's officers, as project manager. At one point, it was suggested to Bodovitz in conversation that his position would have been clearer if he were listed as a commissioner as well as staff chief, as a corporation executive is a member of the Board of Directors he serves. The unassuming side of Bodovitz replied that that was unnecessary. In the same tone, he had said at the outset that the commission's work was just a year's experiment that "might be some fun". In fact, with the full recognition of the members in general, he was a commissioner-plus, in motivation, status, and input.

The Commission skirts "social issues."

Within the overall mandate to "adopt a general vision for the Bay Area in the year 2020", the convenors asked the Commission to focus on regional governance, land use, transportation, and air quality. The Commission was aware however, that the "general vision" of the future region certainly depended greatly on factors such as levels of social tension, crime, unemployment and economic stratification, and that these characteristics also had significant influences on land use and transportation design. The Commission leadership gave a steady but somewhat mechanical respect to regional social issues, which were largely interpreted as ethnic ones. This perspective was often raised by Joe Bodovitz when it was being neglected in some particular context. Among the first meetings he scheduled Lew Butler, of California Tomorrow, to speak on ethnic change as a dynamic aspect of the future, and he asked African-American Oakland Deputy Mayor Leo Bazile to address the group as an ethnic minority political figure. Papers were commissioned from Asian, African-American and Hispanic academics on the needs and claims of their communities. But when Commissioners Lynette Lee,
Aileen Hernandez, Gordon Chin or Dwight Steele tried to raise the intensity of economic stratification and the needs of the inner city poor as ills central to a metropolitan agenda, they did not get far.

The leadership and most of the Commission members — perhaps like the convenors — wanted to skirt social questions for several reasons. The social agenda could only be ambitious, and efforts in this domain would necessarily be costly. This set of issues was not new. Public resistance to restatements of familiar social needs, now clothed in regional vocabulary, could be expected. This in turn could damage the prospects of the core agenda for regional governance, land use, and transportation. If a strong commitment to social issues had been part of the original intention, the commission would have had a different composition, and more time would have been committed from the outset to cover an expanded topic; as it was, the commissioners had more than enough work for one year. The Commission did go outside its core agenda to discuss education; two Commissioners (del Prado and Flores) were school superintendents and education, as it happened, was a particular interest of Commissioner Tom Clausen as a former large-scale employer. But the advice it received was that generally smaller school districts were needed, not any expansion of districts to regional scale.

To put social goals at the heart of the commission's work would have labeled it as a liberal, or even left-wing group in a conservative period. Many members felt that their agenda even without social baggage was already too liberal for comfort and for easy political success, an apprehension which later proved well-grounded. Thus social concerns beyond a certain polite level, and specifically redistributive economic concerns, were restrained by the rule of pragmatic modesty in reform which was prominent in all aspects of the commission's work: "To get something, don't ask for too much." A desire to focus on social concerns was associated with the visionary impulse among commissioners, and thus although often eloquent, was clearly marked as a minority position.

Consultant Scott McCreary commented: "How could you expect major social proposals from a group created by stakeholders from the environmental, business and local-politician communities?" He was right. In the workings of the commission, it was clear that Bay Vision was a production of middle and upper middle class people from all the ethnic groups represented. A focus on egalitarian social amelioration would have been surprising from the large business community. The local politicians' drive for economic equality is tailored to the low voting turnout of lower socio-economic groups, that is to say, is very weak.

Although the broader-gauged environmentalists (certainly including Bodovitz and many of the commissioners) have consciences that frequently remind them not to neglect the growing minority communities, that is not their primary drive. Dwight Steele, and perhaps others of the environmentalists, may have hoped that service on Bay Vision could broaden and deepen the environmentalists' perspective by leading them to grapple with the entire future form of the region, social as well as physical. Bay Vision work probably did broaden some of the environmentalists in this way, but only to a moderate degree. In its final concern with improving the instrument of governance of land use and entrusting many unspecified tasks to the new regional body, the Commission showed relatively little direct interest in exploring the great Lewis Mumford principle that a city and its society are inseparable.

Management of dissent: The less-developed and low-population counties of the North Bay

Of the nine counties in the Bay Area, the four in the northern part of the region have large areas and a good deal of agriculture, but even taken together, they have only about one million of the region's six million people. Marin, Sonoma, Napa and Solano are therefore prime candidates for future development, but they are of very divided mind about that prospect. High-income Marin has installed...
firm growth limitation policies that have proved very popular and have raised property values for existing owners. Although further from San Francisco, Sonoma has accepted more growth in Santa Rosa and in burgeoning new tract suburbs such as Rohnert Park; much of the new population is considered to be displaced northward by Marin's policies. Napa's high-value vineyard agriculture is world renowned, and the Napa County political forces that want to protect it are in a perennial see-saw battle with local adversaries who would welcome an influx of housing and business; at the moment, vineyard people and conservationists have the upper hand in Napa. Solano County includes the city of Vallejo and the fifty-mile section of Interstate 80 between the Bay Area and Sacramento, an increasingly pounding corridor as the Bay Area continues to grow, and Sacramento and its region boom. Pro-development people currently have the upper hand in the politics of Solano County.

Napa and Solano each had a single commissioner on Bay Vision, and each, in very contrasting ways, was a challenge to the Commission leadership.

Mary Handel of Napa was secretary of the County Farm Bureau and the Winegrowers Association there. In practice, she spoke for agriculture throughout the region. One of the younger commissioners, she stayed in systematic consultation with leaders and ordinary citizens in her home area, prepared among the most carefully for the meetings and often spoke eloquently when others seemed to be wandering or speaking on an impulse, not always a very strong one. Representing the agriculture-based conservation element in her county, she was a subscriber to regionalism, but a conditional and somewhat anxious one; her central concern was the preservation of Napa County (and agricultural land throughout the region) from forced urban and suburban development. City-centered growth and a regional commitment to a greenbelt of open space would help her position, because in principle they would reduce horizontal spreading pressures that threatened outlying regions. But many of the rural preservationist and anti-growth people of the northern counties ignored or disbelieved the intended policy thrust of Bay Vision regionalism. Therefore, the power of her thinly-populated constituency to defend itself within a regional government against potentially invasive effects was of great concern to Handel, since Napa's voting weight would be low in relation to more populous counties, particularly in the light of Federal one-person/one vote requirements that have strengthened in recent years.

Handel agreed Napa should build housing to match new employment created within the county, but she expressed her constituents' fear that strong regional government would force Napa to house a flat share of all the new people in the growing Bay Area, regardless of where they worked within the region. The issue was already a confused one—more a field for projections of anxiety than for dealing with facts—since the existing regional council of governments, ABAG is assigned by the state government to allocate state housing planning requirements, including low-income housing, among the Bay Area cities and counties. Doling out requirements to plan for a certain number of housing units is an ungrateful task, even though in this case planning a unit and actually building one are two very different matters. In fact, ABAG distributes the housing-needed assignments on the basis of independent, city-by-city growth projections, and tries on the margin to keep housing as close as possible to jobs, but nonetheless it is often accused of forcing a city or county to accept new residents who "really belong somewhere else."

Chairman Heyman fully understood Mary Handel's concerns, and also understood that the Commission could not give Napa much more power in the organization being created than its low population justified, even for defensive purposes. Among other considerations, the vigilant and aggrieved officials of Santa Clara County, with more than ten times as many people as Napa, would immediately protest, and even potentially withdraw, if their demographic weight were not respected in a new regional board (Santa Clara was indeed systemically slighted in existing special purpose regional
forums). Heyman offered Handel essentially various forms of sympathy and soft soap. He declined, for lack of time and staff resources, to open the pandora's box of the present "fair share" housing requirements administered through ABAG, although they are likely to be an albatross for the regional successor to ABAG. Mary Handel stayed worried, but remained on board, and carried her very effective participation into the Action Coalition after the Commission finished its work. It was easy to imagine, nonetheless, that if an endorsement by the Napa electorate were required for that county to join the regional government, it could well go the wrong way. In fact, the relatively rural, small-community northern part of the region later proved to be a source of particularly difficult opposition to the Bay Vision proposals both within ABAG and the in California Legislature.

Bob Power was from the pro-development rather than the conservationist side of Solano politics, and was a very different individual and a very different sort of challenge to the Commission leadership. Sixtyish, he was the current patriarch of the clan that had built the well-known Nut Tree Restaurant complex on its roadside property in Vacaville and had prospered mightily from traffic on Interstate 80 between Sacramento and the Bay Area. Under Bob Power himself, although he was moving into semi-retired status, the family had continued the vigorous exploitation of their land's proximity to the ceaselessly busy freeway by building a bargain outlet mall near the Nut Tree, and were moving into construction of a general shopping mall. Populist and loquacious, an amateur historian and a resourceful debater, generous in inviting the whole Commission to visit Solano and dine as his guests at the Nut Tree, and at moments overbearing, Power was from the beginning a "character" among the commissioners.

Power and his Solano County constituency may have had incidental points of agreement with the commission's agenda. However, unlike Mary Handel's group their prosperity was built on just what the Commission wanted to curb: rapid growth of automobile traffic, of commercial/industrial activity, and of population on the periphery, in direct opposition to the "city-centered" goals of preserving a greenbelt, concentrating development within an urban limit line, and stressing mass transit. Bob Power was a believer in the inevitability and desirability of growth in California, —he often cited with approval the title of his friend J.S. Holliday's well-known book about the mid-nineteenth century gold rush, The World Rushed In. Power's sense of how a pie was sliced was acute, and he quickly protested if he thought a proposal would disadvantage the counties now getting their growth for the benefit of earlier urbanized areas. He believed that the suburban situation that a comfortably-off American family can find in Solano County was close to idyllic and that it amply justified a long commute by the breadwinner. Mass transit, for him, was essentially perennial pie-in-the-sky intended for urban people very different from himself. Although he agreed that large trucks needed tighter emission curbs, he thought that catalytic exhaust controls had qualified the automobile for indefinite expansion in our society.

In the abstract, Bob Power could see the rational need for coordination among the governments of the region, and even a need for growth management. He could take on enough of the commission's faith at moments to seem a little pious, but he also said in a meeting that his friends in Solano County thought he was something between a kook and a traitor for consorting with Bay Vision. He was happy to take a poke at the notion of city-centered growth or to warn against diluting local control, which he identified with democracy. Power's antagonism to what the Commission was all about became more overt as the Commission grappled toward the final version of its report. He often counseled weakening the text, saying, perhaps with good reason, that he wanted to prevent the Commission from over-reaching and thereby courting public rejection of its work; oftentimes his points in this direction were accepted. His approach was heckling at moments, but not directly threatening or negotiating; in open meeting he never threatened to withdraw his signature from the whole, or to file a minority report. Like a filibustering conservative southern senator, he never conceded, but he never let a point build up into
an all-or-nothing battle. He was aware of his isolation on the commission, and could be both humorous and cantankerous about it in his remarks; overall he was undoubtedly a challenge to the leadership.

Chairman Heyman fielded Bob Power very gently, and very skillfully, agreeing with him wherever he could, letting many barbed remarks pass, occasionally dealing with a Power objection squarely, but more often with a dodge, a joke or a move to another topic. Indeed, the whole Commission did so; there was from time to time a sharp tone in a single reply to something Power had said, but neither the group nor any one member took him on directly and sustainedly. For the final round of text preparation in December, Chairman Heyman put Bob Power on the four-person drafting committee, but Power could not attend that work session in the San Francisco offices.

At the end of the first year's work, Bob Power, who was recognized to be speaking not only for the dominant group in his county, but for the very large number of like-minded pro-development people Bay Area-wide, had contributed by his activity and articulateness to soft-pedalling the commission's statements on public transportation, and to its caution in seeking to take authority from local governments. Still, it was not entirely clear whether Power himself would remain a signing member of the body until publication of the report. At the first meeting of 1991, Chairman Heyman announced with regret that Bob Power was ill, but that it was hoped he would be back for the special session in late February. Power was not; at the April meeting he was represented by Norman Repanich of Solano's private development office and it was understood that Repanich would in effect take his place. Power died in May 1991 of cancer which he had long been fighting.

Thus, by chance the Commission lost its most adversarial member in both style and in structural position. It is not clear what role Power would have played if he had lived. He could well have broken with the commission, but it is also possible that he would have become an advocate of the commission's report in Solano County, seeing it as the lesser evil in comparison with other forms of growth restraint.

A major adversary waiting on every terrain: the non-regionalist local elected officials

In the later meetings of the Bay Vision 2020 Commission the spoken and unspoken focus was on a group which was expected to have an important influence on the Legislature—a set of people which represented the existing metropolitan order, which had a legitimate role representing the general population, and at the same time was an interest group on its own in the matter of regional governance.

This was the full body of current local elected officials: the mayors, city council members, and county supervisors of the Bay Area. A nominal sub-set of them had already, under Rod Diridon's leadership, acted as one of the convening legs of the Bay Vision Commission. It was the convening local officials who had made the rule that no current local office-holders would be Bay Vision commissioners, but it was likely that the impulse to play it that way came primarily from Diridon himself. The elected Bay Vision convenors were a small fraction of all local officials. Among them, individual attitudes toward regionalism varied from the driving enthusiasm of Diridon, who had brought them together and almost always spoke for them, to the indifference, wariness and even disparagement which were more typical of the much larger main body of officeholders.

The Bay Vision Commission's apprehensive focus on the local elected officials, or LEOs, was fully justified and was evident from many explicit remarks in the commission's meetings. It flowed from the experience of the leadership and of several of the members, including recollections of the Knox bills experience. It was confirmed by outside experts who talked about LEO resistance to similar efforts.
elsewhere in the United States. Bradley Inman, a respected San Francisco Examiner columnist on housing and urban planning, wrote when the Bay Vision draft report was published: "Today there are at least 109 reasons why we don't have regional planning in the Bay Area—that's how many city and county governments there are in the nine-county region. Regionalism is the bane of local officials—it means giving up power."

The general run of Bay Area local office holders certainly saw regional government as undercutting and superseding their offices, and have for many decades. They have recognized that air pollution and arterial transportation matters do not follow municipal and county lines, and have ceded them to specialized bodies: a regional air quality board and to the state government (CALTRANS), to the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) Board, and the MTC. But they engineered, and still maintain, the weakness of ABAG, the Bay Area's council of governments (COG). The intention is specifically to rule out a COG with authority over local governments. ABAG, in fact, limits itself to information dissemination, and other related projects and service tasks, with the state-imposed exception discussed above that it allocates "fair share" housing construction requirements in the region — cod liver oil is more popular. In the Bay Area, MTC has been kept distinct from ABAG, although elsewhere in the state, including Los Angeles, San Diego and Sacramento, the COG includes the transportation planning function.

The cities and counties participate in the state system that requires each to write a general plan, but they effectively disregard its least palatable requirement, the middle- and low-income housing construction quotas. Above all, the cities cling to land use authority, that is, zoning powers. Land use is a function that presents special dangers to all property owners because it can always bring in an unwelcome neighbor or activity. Therefore there is a vigorous demand from below to keep land use decisions very local, and "close to the people."

For the office-holders, concern about firm local control over land use is greatly intensified by the fact that under California's taxation system, a locality "makes money" from having a factory or store within its borders, and "loses money" from housing, except the most luxurious. Land use decisions (that is, zoning to bring in industry and commerce, instead of houses) are therefore a key way for a local government to ensure, or to undermine, its solvency. Land use decisions which should arrange economic and social activities in an efficient and harmonious spatial pattern, are distorted when made for their immediate tax consequences alone, an effect known as the "fiscalization of land use". But it is indeed difficult for a local government to see land use decision-making slip away from it to a metropolitan level while it remains vulnerable to important budgetary consequences of those decisions.

A less well-based factor in resistance to regional authority by local elected leaders, in contrast to ordinary citizens, is Luddite replacement anxiety, a factor which is always present and must be managed in any change of technology, scale, or roles. Most LEOs believe that the strengthening of regional government will on balance and in the long run, diminish their powers and the significance of their offices. They are probably right in this perception. Although some may believe that parts of the public business will be conducted better regionally, replacement anxiety arises without regard to the merits, no matter whether the new instrument is better or worse than the old.

An interviewing and mail poll project conducted by the League of Women Voters of the Bay Area in late 1990 and early 1991 consistently found more anxiety and resistance toward regional government among LEOs than among others in the Bay Area population. Fran Packard, an officer of the League and later a BVAC member, led the project. Based on 211 LEO questionnaire responses and the answers of 150 active private citizens, the LEOs were more satisfied with the status quo (39% to 21%) and saw less need for a regional umbrella agency (42% to 71%) than the non-officeholders.
Throughout the set of options presented, the LEOs, consistently more than the private citizens, preferred merely improved coordination among existing governments, or if pushed, a weak rather than an authoritative regional commission. Although a sense emerges from the polling project that many informed people think that strengthened regional organization is inevitable, Fran Packard, the League's analyst of the results, observed, "Few...believe that a regional umbrella agency is likely to be established voluntarily. They share the opinion that the biggest obstacle is "turf," literally and figuratively: local politicians are concerned about protecting local land use and their power bases." (The League's survey also brought out the clear unpopularity of having the state government in Sacramento name the members of a regional commission; rejection of that was the one thing that effectively all Bay Area respondents agreed on.)

The principal statewide unions of LEOs are the League of California Cities and the County Supervisors Association of California. These bodies, particularly the League of Cities, maintain a major and active lobbying presence in Sacramento, and their influence is increased because many state legislators started their careers as local officials, and still identify with that perspective. LEOs by definition have been successful at the ballot box; they start with a stockpile of credibility and influence with the general public. Republican Pete Wilson recognized this when, as a candidate for governor in the fall of 1990, he told the convention of the League of California Cities by television hook-up from his Senatorial office in Washington, that he would protect them and their powers from erosion by, in his portrayal, an overgrown state bureaucracy and encroaching regional bodies.

Should seats on the Regional Commission be filled by direct region-wide at-large election, by district elections or by appointment? If the last, should they be reserved for local office-holders?

With some sense of discomfort, the Bay Vision commissioners came to think of the LEOs as having a veto, or at least a major voice, in the outcome of their recommendations. One way to assuage officeholder anxieties is for local elected leaders to make up all or a substantial part of a new regional council's membership. This permits any individual LEO to think of himself or herself as moving upward to a seat in the new body. Even a LEO who does not intend to serve on the new board can see it as populated with kindred persons responsive to his or her concerns.

It was evident that the LEOs had to be accommodated by significant representation on the regional body. At the same time the Bay Vision Commissioners saw traditional LEO attitudes as a source of the region's problems, and very much wanted the new body to be more than a fresh arena for traditional local rivalries and deadlocks. The Commission was aware that this had been a thorny issue in the Knox period, with many formulas proposed to resolve it. But it also wanted strong ethnic minority membership and participation on the regional body, which elections to local office heavily filter out. In working on the final draft at the beginning of 1991, the question became, how much representation must the LEOs be given for the regional body to have a chance to succeed? One commissioner leaned over and whispered to a colleague, "Will they be satisfied with 120% of the seats?"

However, for the Commission, working out the LEOs' share of membership could only be reached after deciding whether the regional body would be appointed, or directly elected. If elected, would seats be contested at-large throughout the region, or by districts? As a matter of principle, some Bay Vision commissioners considered elected membership on the regional board highly desirable. The matter came up for discussion at the same time that the notion was emerging of starting with a four year provisional Commission which would bring the permanent body into existence.
As Joe Bodovitz and others pointed out, the choices posed to the voters by an at-large election of regional board members would be essentially unintelligible. At least until a pattern of parties or slates emerged at the regional level, getting elected would depend on previous region-wide celebrity or on having large campaign funds to achieve name recognition across the nine counties. An at-large direct election, it was estimated, would demand costly campaigning, and thus be biased in favor of well-financed candidates, and very unlikely to produce geographical and ethnic representation matching the region’s population. It would give advantage to candidates from San Francisco, and possibly San Jose, which were the seats of region-dominating media, such as the San Francisco Chronicle, and the San Jose Mercury News.

Direct election by districts also raised the problems of excessive influence of campaign funds, and adequate representation of minorities. District election, moreover, could make it difficult or impossible to construct a representative body of reasonable size that respected both the existing political units of the area, and the principle of one person/one vote. The best known district-elected Bay Area body is the BART board, and it was not considered effective by most Bay Vision commissioners.

At least at the beginning, new regional offices were likely to be obscure ones, and the candidates and their positions equally unfamiliar to the public. Many electors would vote, as they do now, for the long bottom of the ballot without the faintest idea of whom or what they were choosing. Real democracy — and public engagement to back the decisions taken by a deliberative body — seemed impossible to achieve in such a marginalized situation starved of real public information and attention. (An important point in favor of unifying regional government was that a single locus of authority would give consequential regional decisions better visibility by comparison with the Stygian obscurity of the present specialized agencies.)

It was recognized from the Knox bills’ experiences of fifteen years earlier, that direct election in either form would be a red flag to the LEOs, since they would see themselves as automatically excluded from seats (or at least forced to choose between local and regional-level service, and in the latter case be required to run in a fresh electoral race). Direct election of the regional Commission could therefore be expected to make the whole proposal more vulnerable to LEO veto, exercisable either through the media or the legislature.

By the commission's informal method of consensus development it came to be understood that the initial provisional regional body would be appointed. In the December 1990 draft of the report direct election of members of the subsequent permanent regional body was discussed, but the recommendation for the first stage was to choose among a couple of systems of appointing a mixed LEO and citizen body. After the period of consultation with the public and the localities during the winter of 1991, the "small d" democrats among the Bay Vision commissioners requested language in the final report "expressing the view that the preferred method of selecting the permanent body would be by direct election." However, in discussion, two ethnic minority speakers expressed disquiet at the way present-day elections produce unrepresentative results, especially in the absence of public financial support for campaigns. The call to specify a preference for direct elections to the permanent body then failed narrowly, by 11 to 13 voices in a straw poll, but the hopes of some Commissioners for an elected permanent regional commission were mentioned in the final report.

With a free hand, the Commission would doubtless have provided for appointment of many of the interim or permanent regional commission members from the general public. It sought specifically a
regional commission made up of people with a region-wide outlook, and not a collection of horsetraders whose point of departure was parochial views and allegiances.

During the Bay Vision Commission's round of external consultations on its first draft in the winter of 1991, the ABAG Executive Board called for fifty percent or more of the seats for LEOs; it later passed a resolution demanding 100% of the seats. The LEO-dominated MTC and Air Board also gave voice to such sentiments, and in this period, Pete Wilson assumed office as Governor. The May final report reflected these developments. It recommended that sixty percent of the expected 30+ seats on an appointed regional agency board be held by LEOs, who would follow their customary county-based selection procedures to fill them. Subsequent deliberations in the successor Bay Vision Action Coalition (BVAC), in which business, environmentalist, and LEO convenors sat directly across the table from another, adjusted the LEO share from 60% to 67%, leaving 33% public members. When completed by the BVAC, moreover, SB 797 provided that the LEO members would take their seats on the commission first, and that the officeholders members would then choose the public members from a list of nominees generated by the Bay Vision 2020 Commission.

"Another layer of government!"—a difficult charge to rebut

In their work in local government, local officials absorbed — and themselves felt — plenty of impatience with government, with its lengthy processes and remoteness from immediate human impulses. LEOs were among the many citizens whose first, and very negative reaction to the Bay Vision proposals was, "Another layer of government! The last thing we need."

The Commission labored mightily to make the point that in calling for fusing ABAG, MTC and the Air Board, it was proposing a consolidation or "streamlining" of existing government, not the creation of an additional layer. National expert Neil Peirce, who spoke to the Bay Vision Commission at its third meeting, pointed to the proliferation and entanglement of uncoordinated and even turf-contesting special purpose agencies. He said persuasively that there was already "too much government", and that it was slow and expensive. He asserted that decisions could be speeded up and improved by updating and rationalizing the overall system through a general purpose decision-making body at the metropolitan level. There would be better government, and maybe even a smaller quantity of government if overlaps were ended. In this perspective, the Commission thought of itself as advocating both better government, and in final effect, less government, for the region.

But that was a subtle point, and a hard one to sell to adversaries of regionalism. One reason that it was a hard sell was that while many LEOs feared new structures as unwanted competition with existing government which was their niche, the same people, when it came down to specifics, were not eager to see existing government seriously pruned. Bay Vision commissioners certainly had it in the back of their minds that if regional arrangements were put before the general public, for example in a ballot proposition, its opponents would campaign heavily with the slogan, "Another layer of government", and that that would be an effective bludgeon.

Another widespread and characteristic response to the Commission's work came, often from local officials, in two stages. "Wonderful ideas, and long overdue!" was the first reaction, when the subject was fresh and abstract. But when the actual moment to endorse specific regionalist reforms came, then reservations crowded up, many objectionable details were found, and in the end the local leader who had been an initial well wisher turned into a "no" vote, or absented himself from the fray.
Process Management: Time, and passing the baton; steering clear of technically tough problems and current high profile issues in regional planning

The Bay Vision 2020 Commission began work at the end of 1989 with a sense of sharp time definition: it would have a beginning, a middle and an end in the space of one year, and would put its views on the incoming governor’s desk in January 1991. Members felt some anxiety that they could hash the problem out in any depth in time, and this was intensified as the stream of external experts speaking at a relatively elementary level on various topics lengthened. The leadership stressed that it was the experts’ function to bring everyone in the heterogeneous group to a reasonably equal exposure to the issues.

As the Fall 1990 meetings gradually turned to the crystallizing of drafts, it became clear that although the commission’s bite was not going to be deep, its technical expertise, such as it was, would not reach to several central and difficult problems, notably to the very intimidating matter of tax-sharing, and to possible revisions of the state’s “fair share” requirements on localities to plan for housing, including low-income housing. The leadership did not want the Commission to speak in such domains on a purely idealistic or political basis without having gone into the abundant technicalities. In general, Joe Bodovitz was reluctant to see the Commission take a stand on subjects which it had not directly addressed in a meeting with an expert speaker. To maintain its credibility, he believed, commissioners had to avoid “popping off” as laypersons on subjects they had not studied.

This concern also lay behind the Commission’s marked avoidance of controversial land use and public policy cases which were going on at the time. Two classic ones were the extension of BART service to San Francisco International Airport, and the proposal to build a new north-south toll highway from Sunol to Vacaville on the eastern margin of the region. Each was unmistakably at the regional level of interest, and could have served as mobilizing flags to illustrate the need for strong regional decision-making to check auto-dependency and sprawl. But the leadership saw that each of these very live issues had two sides to it with constituencies on both sides. With long-range credibility in mind, they concluded that the Commission should not take positions in current concrete cases without studying each in detail. That would necessitate holding what would amount to hearings on each case, Joe Bodovitz believed, and that would be an unjustified distraction in the limited time available. The gain from the hands-off approach was that the Commission steered clear of the most vigorous and immediate kinds of controversies, and thus avoided making enemies. The downside, however, was that the proposed regional governance was made to seem somewhat abstract and disconnected from the kinds of real-life problems which in fact it was being created to manage.

The method of founding BCDC and the California Coastal Commission offered the precedent of calling for a provisional regional commission for the first four or five years work, and deferring the more difficult problems to that body. Even in its first provisional period, the regional body being proposed would be more institutionalized and “regular” than the ad hoc Bay Vision commission, and also would have far greater staff resources through being publicly financed rather than a voluntary effort.

Even so, it was clearly going to be difficult to get a meaningful completed text by December 1990, much less the actual legislative language that some Commission members were hoping for. In October 1990, the leaders of the Commission and its San Francisco members met with Art Agnos, then mayor of San Francisco. At the same time that Agnos expressed support for the commission’s general line of regionalist thinking, he suggested that its first text be put out as a draft and that reactions to it be solicited around the Bay. The Commission could then stay in some form of existence until the Spring, when it would complete a final text, taking into account the comments received on the draft during the winter of 1991. In November, Republican Pete Wilson beat Democrat Dianne Feinstein in the election
for Governor. Wilson was the less favorably predisposed of the two candidates to the Bay Vision approach, and this factor supported the wisdom of not going to Sacramento with loose ends.

The Bay Vision Commissioners themselves were not eager to be released from service. Although it was the polite formula of the leadership that the commissioners were busy and time-constrained people, in fact virtually everyone who had been asked to serve had actively wanted to do so, and the enthusiasm of most of the members to work on the problems was substantial. This was a great asset. Funds were not an acute constraint. An extension of the commission’s life into March to make its draft report final after comments from the municipalities and the public was easily agreed to by the members.

The winter consultation period produced voluminous correspondence from individual citizens, and also from office holders and city councils. Few if any genuinely new points were raised, but apprehension about the loss of local control was often voiced. Certain questions that the Bay Vision Commission had left open in the first draft were resolved in the final printed version of May. During the 1991 Winter extension, moreover, one major piece of city input arrived in time for good discussion by the commission. San Jose, now the region’s largest city in population, had a new mayor from a very close election in November 1990, dynamic and progressive former Councilwoman Susan Hammer. She was very open indeed to regionalist thinking, and brought in interested San Jose city council members, notably Shirley Lewis, who later took a position with Santa Clara County’s Congestion Management Agency, and assigned staff to do a close review of the Bay Vision December text. The review was very supportive, but San Jose, based on its own paucity of industry, also raised much more acutely than the Commission had earlier wanted to face the need to balance tax receipts better among localities, in order to reduce the often overwhelming incentives for the fiscalization of land use decisions. Mayor Hammer also offered funding support for the planned successor body, to be known as the Bay Vision Action Coalition (BVAC), an offer which was accepted with alacrity.

The Bay Vision commission’s last regular meeting was the double session of February 25, 1991 that all but finalized the report. After the last ministrations of a text polishing sub-committee, 20,000 copies of the report were printed in an economical but typographically striking form and distributed in May. The report, which includes a full listing of commissioners, is reproduced in annex to this paper.

Public reaction to the Bay Vision 2020 report was for the most part positive, but the tone, notably from the dominant regional paper, the San Francisco Chronicle, was more genuflection to Bay Vision as a piety, than a war cry to enact its recommendations. The San Jose Mercury News continued to express its support—Mercury News Editor Rob Elder had been a member of the Regional Issues Forum, but like many Santa Clara county and Silicon Valley people, he harbored some doubts about whether the South Bay belonged in the Bay Area, or contrarily, should try to build up a distinct metropolitan region around San Jose. Some of the outlying suburban weeklies were quite defensive and negative toward Bay Vision in general, and an important and conservative East Bay daily, the Contra Costa Times published in Walnut Creek, was sharply negative in its lead Sunday editorial on May 19. It dwelt particularly on the threat it saw in Bay Vision of a redistribution of local tax revenues away from cities that had built up their tax bases by attracting business and industry — listing six such cities in its own market area in the northern and eastern part of the region. For the Times, the Bay Vision report was “disturbing”, ... a product of “social and land-use engineers disguised as Robin Hoods...It’s not a vision. It’s a nightmare.”

The Bay Vision 2020 Commission met once in April 1991, when its report was at the printer, but by its June 24 meeting, after the report had come out, it was clear that its successor, the BVAC described below, had become the primary body, with the baton firmly shifted into its hand. The Bay

All the meetings after the Commission published its report were more agreeable alumni updatings than substantive work sessions. Attendance was much lower. The Commission heard reports on the progress of BVAC's work, and members offered some reactions; most avuncularly approving of BVAC's general fidelity to the Bay Vision conceptions, a few expressing disgruntlement at BVAC's retreat on certain points. Some criticisms seemed clearly animated by an individual commissioner's non-inclusion among the eleven commissioners who joined the onward BVAC process.

The Commission's members understood that it continued to serve as a sort of Board of Trustees to the in-the-trenches operational/political work of the BVAC, summarized below. Former commissioners stood ready to attest at legislative hearings that the proposal of BVAC, that is to say Senate Bill 797, carried out the Commission's intentions and had the commissioners' support. Actually, SB 797 included a provision for a future life of the Bay Vision 2020 Commission as the nominating body for the Regional Agency's public (non-LEO) members. In the winter of 1993, a general invitation was extended to all members of the original Bay Vision 2020 Commission to join the work of BVAC, but the response at that point was slight.

III. LIFE AFTER THE BAY VISION 2020 COMMISSION

The Bay Vision Action Coalition, and Senate Bill 797

Almost immediately upon coming into office, Governor Pete Wilson, through Richard Sybert, his head of the Office of Planning and Research (OPR), asked the Legislature to set aside regional planning and growth management proposals for the calendar year 1991, so that the new Administration could review the subject and propose a program and legislation to respond to it. For Bay Vision, this ruled out an uninterrupted movement directly toward legislation in the first half of the 1991-92 legislature, and created another year of forced temporizing, as 1990 had been while waiting for the Deukmejian administration to expire. But in the course of the winter 1991 consultations with city leaders, Mayor Susan Hammer of San Jose encouraged Bay Vision to use this second year for further consultation and shaping of the legislation to be proposed.

Mayor Hammer's interest gave the Heyman/Bodovitz leadership and the three major Bay Vision convenors — Orman, Siracusa and Diridon — increased confidence as they launched the successor organization to the Commission, the smaller and more intense Bay Vision Action Coalition (BVAC) in the Spring of 1991. Rather than deliberation, BVAC's three purposes were 1) to educate the public in the Bay Area about the Bay Vision recommendations, 2) to shape the recommendations into a legislative bill, and 3) to lobby for passage of that bill by the California legislature in Sacramento. All of BVAC's members were to be committed advocates of a consolidation of the specialized agencies and the preparation of a regional plan, rather than philosophers (or doubters) on the broad points made by the Bay Vision commission.

Eleven of the then thirty-one Bay Vision Commissioners were invited to be members of BVAC, where they joined direct representatives of the convenors: Angelo Siracusa for the Bay Area Council, Larry Orman for the Greenbelt Alliance, and Rod Diridon and several of his colleagues from the Locally Elected Convenors. Mike Heyman and Joe Bodovitz continued as chairman and project manager. BVAC, as it worked out in practice, had a less formalized membership and more fluid participation than the Commission. Shirley Lewis, a San Jose Councilwoman, played an active and significant part, as
did Susanna Schlendorf of Danville, then Vice Mayor Leo Bazile of Oakland, Councilwoman Kathleen Foote of Mill Valley, Mayor Warren Hopkins of Rohnert Park and Supervisor Mary Griffin of San Mateo. Hopkins and Griffin were the immediate past president and the current president of ABAG, respectively. Among the several local officials who came from time to time, San Francisco Supervisor Doris Ward made important and positive interventions, as did Leo Bazile of Oakland. ABAG’s Executive Director, Revan Tranter was often present, and ABAG Planning Director Gary Binger was a major contributor. In addition to Heyman and Bodovitz, several people drawn into the subject through serving as Bay Vision Commissioners remained active in BVAC, notably Pam Lloyd, Mary Handel, Aileen Hernandez, Reid Gustafson, Sara Conner, Paul deFalco and Bob Mang. Remarkably, San Jose Mayor Hammer came to several BVAC meetings herself, and San Jose was always well represented by staff member Georgiana Flaherty and from time to time by others, including City Council member Frank Fiscalini, and senior budget expert Bob Brownstein.

From September 11 to September 30, 1991, the Elected Convenors of Bay Vision—the Diridon group—with the cooperation of the LWVBA, sponsored six evening briefing and discussion sessions organized by ABAG at six locations in the region. Although primarily for local officials, the public was also invited. Attendance was reasonable, but not spectacular. The sessions did not produce major substantive suggestions, but they advanced the BVAC mission of conducting local “education” in favor of regionalism. They also responded to the protests of some LEOs who complained that they had not been informed and consulted, despite Bay Vision’s mailing its report to all local office holders and its constant search for ways to let the regional community know of its work.

In its life of more than eighteen months and some twenty meetings up to the fall of 1992, the BVAC greatly sharpened the Bay Vision Commission recommendations, trying to frame a legislative bill that would appeal to the regional public and local elected officials, as well as to state legislators. The direction of the changes was entirely pragmatic and operational, trimming the camel to get it through the eye of the needle. The adjustments included increasing the percentage of LEOs on the board of the regional body from 60% to 67%, dropping the claim for interim land use powers (indeed, for any power beyond the existing and expected authorities of the three agencies to be consolidated), and providing a full year’s transition period after the new agency comes together before it takes over the powers of the specialized agencies it is superseding.

As the legislative bill emerged from BVAC it provided for the interim Bay Area Regional Commission to have 57 members. Everybody involved was aware that this was an implausibly large body. It arose, through much tortured arithmetic, from a desire to give even the smallest county two seats on the commission. But, if one starts with such a figure for Napa, the large counties such as Santa Clara and Alameda had to have many representatives to maintain proportionality with their populations as required by one person/one vote rules. When public members were added, the body reached an embarrassingly large size. This was recognized as a liability in the legislation and was cut back in the 1993 version of the bill.

The BVAC period also saw greatly increased stress on “bottom-up” planning, and on the sub-regional level, now basically identified with the counties. Mill Valley’s Kathleen Foote often mentioned as an example Marin County’s pathbreaking county-wide planning efforts. It was understood that elsewhere such activities would probably be handled by each county’s recently established Congestion Management Agency.

The call for urban limit lines was the only theme to strengthen in the transition from the Bay Vision Commission’s report to Senate Bill 797, which was the product of BVAC’s work. Although fiercely advocated by the Greenbelt Alliance, urban limit lines excited opposition to the Bay Vision
approach from builder and real estate interests —and because of that, from Republicans in Sacramento. These provisions would seem to lead a contentious and perilous existence.

In the winter of 1991, State Senator Rebecca Morgan, a moderate Republican of San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties, agreed to sponsor legislation embodying the Bay Vision work. The first version of Senate Bill 797, though merely a place-holding sketch, was submitted and began its legislative life on March 7, 1991. Sen. Morgan’s aide, Pat Carlson, became a regular participant in BVAC meetings, as did Steve Sanders, a specialist in both growth management and legislative drafting, who was attached to the Senate Office of Research. Often working on very short notice, Sanders provided the language and the format for a series of drafts of SB 797. His experience and intelligent equanimity became a major asset for the exercise. With funds provided by the Bay Area Council, public interest lobbyist Ken Emanuels advised on strategy in Sacramento, and did soundings and contacts in favor of the Morgan bill in both houses of the Legislature.

Governor Wilson was expected to address the management of California’s growth in his State of the State address in January 1992, after his Executive Task Force had worked on it. He did not do so, since recession forced him to deal with crises in the California economy and the State budget in his speech. Nonetheless, his request for a year's abstention from legislative activity ended with the close of 1991.

When the legislative process became "real" at the opening of 1992, it was quickly evident that the community of people in the Bay Area who took an active interest in growth management and regionalism, of which LEOs were a very important element, was a very different community from the California Legislature in Sacramento. Although there was certainly a relationship between the two forums, it was not a simple one, and gaining support in the Bay Area was a different operation from gaining support in Sacramento. A pivotal episode highlighted this: For several essentially accidental reasons, Hispanic participation in Bay Vision 2020 was never strong, but SB 797 had to pass muster with Hispanic and African-American legislators from populous, and perhaps ethnically more awakened Southern California. A group called the Ethnic Coalition, which included Southern California Hispanics, objected to SB 797's call for a study of population trends in the light of a regional population carrying capacity, a point in the bill which emanated from the environmentalists. Bay Vision's Bob Mang, who had proposed that language, along with Aileen Hernandez immediately went into intense liaison with the Ethnic Coalition people. Mang and Hernandez modified the objectionable language, and mobilized the support of Bay Area African-American political figures, who had had a full role in Bay Vision. The Ethnic Coalition withdrew its objections to the bill. Without this responsiveness and intense activity, SB 797 would doubtless have failed within the Assembly, and never made it to the Senate in 1992.

Although Sen. Morgan circulated the SB 797 draft for comment to many LEO reviewers in the Bay Area when it was close to its final form in the early summer of 1992, she made it clear that acceptability to the local officeholders was by no means her only standard for the bill. She vividly highlighted that the Legislature was a very different forum when she said that she would not for a moment accept entire composition of the Regional board by LEOs, as many LEOs thought was their right. She recognized that all-LEO composition would rule out having a reasonable proportion of Commission seats held by members of ethnic minorities. It was a basic principle for her, she said, that the ethnic minorities must be represented, and that the public member seats would be used in large measure to achieve that.

In the Legislature, the attitude of Senators and Assembly members from the Bay Area toward SB 797 was clearly of particular importance, since it cued members from other parts of the state. The
breakdown of the Bay Area delegation into supporters and opponents of the bill was doubtless related to LEO opinion within the region.

Most Bay Area legislators supported SB 797 when it came to a vote at the end of August 1992, but there were important exceptions. Democratic Majority Leader, Assemblyman Tom Hannigan from Solano County, was the second ranking Democrat in the Assembly after Speaker Willie Brown, and he strongly opposed SB 797. This reflected the pro-development attitude of Solano that had been expressed throughout the Bay Vision Commission meetings by Bob Power. Hannigan, who seemed to be responding more to local officials of his constituency than to his own philosophical dispositions, battled SB 797 particularly in the Ways and Means committee, but was overwhelmed when Speaker Willie Brown, himself from San Francisco, put his shoulder to the wheel for the bill in Assembly Ways and Means, and on the floor of the Assembly. The bill's success in the Assembly was also due in large part to the intense work in its favor by first year Oakland Assemblywoman Barbara Lee.

In the Senate, where SB 797 foundered at last on August 31, in the chaotic and budget-obsessed final moments of the difficult 1992 session, most of the Bay Area Senators were quietly in favor, but two, Independent Quentin Kopp of San Francisco and San Mateo, and Democrat Mike Thompson of Marin, Napa and Sonoma Counties were vigorously and demonstratively opposed. Sen. Boatwright of Contra Costa County, a conservative Democrat, was also strongly opposed.

In the Bay Area delegation, as in the overall Assembly and Senate, there was a definite partisan breakdown; most support for the bill came from Democrats, although its sponsor, Sen. Morgan, was a moderate Republican. Opposition came from Bay Area members from the outlying, small-town parts of the region whose local elected officials and presumably populations, were the most apprehensive about regionalism. With one exception, there were no surprises in this geography.

The exception was Sen. Kopp of San Francisco and San Mateo. A dominant figure in transportation matters in Sacramento, Kopp may have had an interest as well in keeping the management of transportation separate from land use and environmental affairs. He felt strongly that fifty-seven members was an excessive number for the regional board. In SB 797's May 5, 1992 hearing before the Senate Local Government Committee he based his opposition on its lack of local government support, particularly in San Mateo County, part of which he represents, and where he asserted 20 cities were opposed to it. "I've tried legislating without local support, and it doesn't work." Kopp said. In his portrayal, the Morgan bill, regionwide, was losing support from the previous year, and was really desired only by Santa Clara county.

Sen. Kopp's district includes a part of San Francisco as well as a part of San Mateo. He evidently was able to take the position he did because San Francisco's support for intensified regional planning was lukewarm. San Francisco's notion that it is special, that it plays in a world league that San Jose will never join, certainly has historical roots and finds support where cable car bells can be heard. Mirror attitudes are part of the traditional social landscape of the region: the rest of the area looks upon San Francisco as haughty and self-absorbed. San Francisco Supervisor Doris Ward, an occasional participant in BVAC and a supporter of its proposals in ABAG meetings, was a breath of fresh air; she cut through the complexities and regarded the Bay Vision regionalist recommendations as a case of long-overdue common sense. But apart from her, official San Francisco participation in the Bay Vision exercise, and indeed in ABAG, was feeble in general, unmistakably weaker than the interest of San Jose and Oakland.
Other marchers in the parade: Parallel and related regionalist and growth management activities in California

When Bay Vision was set in motion by the RIF and Rod Diridon in 1989, it was an early awakening from the long sleep of interest in metropolitan reform, growth management and infrastructural reinvestment. But by mid-1992, when the Morgan bill was having hearings and votes in Sacramento, it was by no means alone.

Los Angeles 2000 antedated Bay Vision, but did seem to have fallen prey to internal dispersion, and was not prominent in the debates of the summer and early Fall in 1992. Senator Robert Presley, (D.-Riverside) sponsored Senate Resolution 39 in 1988, which initiated the Senate Urban Growth Policy Project. This eventually served as underpinning for the important state-wide Economic and Environmental Recovery bills of 1992 and 1993, discussed below.

Speaker Willie Brown introduced AB 4242 in the winter of 1990. Although he never seemed to devote an intense level of his own attention to it, it was carefully put together, and received various consultations and revisions led by Todd Kaufman of the Assembly Office of Research. A successor bill, AB 3, was introduced in the 1991-92 session, but never became a major focus of interest, probably in part because of the domination of the session by budget concerns, and the Speaker’s battles with the Governor.

Speaker-led Assembly interest, however, provided impetus and funding for a set of ten statewide consultations conducted in 1991 by the Growth Management Consensus Project, a special unit set up within the California State University at Sacramento with Hewlett Foundation support. Joe Bodovitz participated in this forum on behalf of Bay Vision. The sessions produced a report in February 1992, which stressed the need for attention to urban sprawl, and for movement throughout California toward more carefully planned, denser, essentially "city-centered" land uses. Although the CSU-Sacramento report was praised for casting a wide net, it was criticized for doing little to integrate or prioritize the recommendations it seized in. It did not produce actionable results comparable to SB 797 or the consensus Bay Vision Commission Report, but it probably did tend to stimulate statewide interest in growth management and to drive the topic forward.

As Chairman of the Local Government Committee, Assemblyman Sam Farr, a Democrat from Bay Area-bordering Santa Cruz and Monterrey Counties, steered SB 797 through to approval in his committee, and supported it on the floor. He was involved in a sweeping package, centered on the Economic and Environmental Recovery Act (EERA)(SB 929) of 1992, developed by Sen. Robert Presley, Speaker Willie Brown and himself. It grouped a bill, a constitutional amendment, and a second ballot proposition, which would have promulgated new planning standards very compatible with the Bay Vision outlook. The EERA package also provided both substantial new funds through a state bond issue to cities willing to accept the new standards, and easier access to local funds by amending the requirement for local bonds from two-thirds to simple majority voter approval. If both SB 797 and the Farr-Presley EERA package had passed in 1992, the Bay Area Regional Commission that SB 797 established would have been endorsed in its authority within the Bay Area and made a part of a statewide network of such bodies established by the Farr reforms. At session’s end, however, neither the Morgan nor the Farr-Presley proposals passed.

Governor Wilson entrusted work on growth management to his Office of Planning and Research (OPR), directed by Richard Sybert. Sybert headed an Executive Task Force on growth created by the Governor, made up of Cabinet members and Agency heads of the state government. In addition to deliberations among themselves, the Executive branch task force held twelve hearings in
locations throughout California. Three were within the Bay Area, at San Jose, Santa Rosa, and San Francisco; Chairman Heyman gave testimony for the Bay Vision commission. The Sybert Commission also published the results of its staff work, and of academic papers it commissioned. It was expected that its final recommendations would form the basis of the Governor’s State of the State Address in January 1992, but that plan was sidetracked by the crises in the state’s economy and its budget. Ultimately, the recommendations of Sybert’s committee were endorsed by the Governor and released in January 1993. They were cool toward new authoritative regional structures, so much so as to give encouragement to Bay Area local officials opposed to SB 797, and to cast a shadow over Bay Vision hopes for significant support from Republican legislators in 1993.

Another Wilson initiative was a Special Commission on Productivity in California, chaired by Peter Ueberroth. Its report tended to see environmental controls of the sort favored by Bay Vision people as burdens for business, but the Ueberroth report did speak of a need to rationalize metropolitan government. An earlier growth management bill by Republican Senator Marian Bergeson came to be the vehicle for the Ueberroth Commission ideas, and in 1993 her bill was worked into a package with the EERA set of recommendations, making that a bi-partisan project.

The attitude of Governor Wilson through 1991 and 1992, and perhaps even more the long-running uncertainty about his attitude, was a major thorn in the side of the Bay Vision effort, probably felt the most strongly by Chairman Heyman. There were two aspects of the problem the Governor represented for Bay Vision: Wilson was the state leader of the Republican party. Despite sponsorship of SB 797 by a Republican Senator, Republicans were, as expected, predominantly opposed to the bill in the Legislature on anti-more-government grounds and from wariness of environmental controls. It was understood that Wilson shared this outlook.

Even more significantly, as Governor, Wilson was expected to want to keep the control of growth management at the state, rather than the regional level. This was understandable for the leader of state government. At least until the current recession, all of California was suffering from unmanaged growth. Did it make sense to let one region develop and apply its own solutions separately from the rest of the state? Would allowing the Bay Area, or San Diego, to go ahead on their own hamper future statewide solutions and institutions? One approach was to erect a statewide framework which would be permissive toward local initiatives, as Speaker Brown’s bill came to be, and as the Farr/Presley proposals were. However, Bay Vision representatives, after various evidently baffling conversations with Richard Sybert, thought this decentralization could not appeal to the Governor as head of the state’s executive machinery.

For Chairman Heyman, the unresponsiveness of the State executive branch seemed like a challenge. Heyman said he was not averse to requirements that the Bay Area meet statewide growth management standards, but he wanted solutions devised in the Bay Area for the Bay Area’s problems, rather than policies imposed by offices of the state government. It was tempting to raise in the Bay Area the banner of “regional home rule”, a slogan Heyman attributed to UC Berkeley Professor Victor Jones, which resonated emotionally for some people.

There was also prestigious state-wide activity on the part of the California Council for Environmental and Economic Balance (CCEEB), a business and labor group that testified in Sacramento in favor of SB 797, and had worked on the development of the Farr/Presley proposals. Former Governor Pat Brown led a press conference in which the CCEEB announced its own report on growth management on February 21, 1991. John Knox, now in private law practice in San Francisco, was chairman of this effort.
There were three strands of action in this field among the Bay Area locally elected officials themselves within the Association of Bay Area Governments.

1) ABAG has a Regional Planning Committee (RPC), chaired in this period by Contra Costa Supervisor Tom Powers of Richmond, and made up overwhelmingly of LEOs. Through 1990, the ABAG RPC labored mightily and produced its own statement on the need for greater regional coordination in land use and planning in general. Their Land Use Policy Framework received ABAG Executive Board approval on the second try. Its substantive perspective was essentially the same as Bay Vision's, calling for movement toward city-centered growth, including growth that would support a shift away from the private car, would discourage the long driver-only commute, and encourage public transportation. It called for better jobs-housing proximity, and intensified and well planned re-use of central land and existing infrastructure rather than outward sprawl into new land requiring heavy fresh investment. But the RPC text conspicuously avoided any proposals for reorganization or for new governmental structures to lead in the city-centered direction. This was its sharp point of difference with Bay Vision's proposal to merge ABAG, the MTC and the Air Board. The contrast on the point of new institutions highlighted the elected officials' anxieties about preserving existing organizations and prerogatives.

2) In the winter of 1991, the Bay Vision draft report came before the Executive Board of ABAG, a body of about thirty-five members which meets eight or nine times a year. The draft obtained support after a debate which centered on whether the Bay Vision recommendation for public members as well as LEOs on the board of the Regional Commission was tolerable. At that point, the Bay Vision recommendation was for a 50% LEO, 50% public member composition. The ABAG Board, after many calls at the meeting for 100% LEO composition, stipulated in its resolution of endorsement that 50% or better LEO board membership should be assured. ABAG's Executive Board later called for 100% LEO membership on the regional commission.

3) The third stream of the ABAG reaction became the most prominent. ABAG meets twice a year in a full general assembly, at which every county and city in the region is present and has one vote. The regionalist proposals of Bay Vision, including consolidating ABAG with MTC and the Air Board, came before the general assemblies of November 1991 and April 1992, as the focal agenda item of both assemblies, with particularly extensive discussion in November 1991. In each case, the Bay Vision proposals failed to obtain general assembly endorsement. The requirements for such an ABAG decision are stringent: separate majorities of both the nine counties and the roughly one hundred cities. As Rod Diridon stressed, sway was exercised by the smaller and peripheral cities in the one-city/one-vote arrangement that made Ross in Marin County, with 2,000 people count as much as San Jose, with 800,000 people. Diridon asserts that, if the ABAG voting were adjusted to reflect population weights, the Bay Vision proposals would have passed. This is likely true, although it would be difficult to confirm since general assembly votes are taken by count of hands; totals are tallied, but the votes of individual cities and counties are not officially noted.

After its 1991 deliberations, the ABAG general assembly called for the development of its own Growth Management Platform. A set of declarations and options was developed by the staff based on wide consultation with member governments and LEOs and presented to the April 1992 meeting. That Assembly endorsed some but by no means all of the propositions, and created a special augmented version of the Legislative and Governmental Organization Committee (L&GO) under Councilwoman Shirley Sisk of Newark to work on the problematical remainder.

The augmented L&GO committee worked intensely. Councilwoman Sisk introduced its proposals at the Fall 1992 meeting by saying that her group had endured "arrogance and being
ignored" during the Morgan bill hearing process in Sacramento, and had been relieved that SB 797 had died in the end. She said her group looked to support from the Governor in the next phase. Her committee's text was very resistant to the Bay Vision proposals, calling only for increased voluntary cooperation among existing local government entities, for working out a concept of regional development, and investigation of the possibility that the creation of an institution might be in order, and be a cost-efficient way to forward that concept. If created, such a council would be made up entirely of LEOs, and public members would be relegated to an advisory board. Alameda County Supervisor Mary King, an African-American, spoke a bitter reproach that this would relegate minority inhabitants of the region to powerlessness, but she was not heeded. The text went on that if there were to be a regional level of planning, it would be only advisory in relation to localities and local general plans. The ABAG General Assembly of October 1992 approved the Sisk committee's product, in effect completing the local elected officials' work on their conception of a regional growth management statement begun a year before. This position was thereafter embodied in the initial version of Sonoma Democrat Valerie Brown's Assembly Bill 398 in the 1993-94 session of the State Legislature.

On May 6, 1992 Air Board passed a resolution opposing its consolidation with ABAG and MTC, and withholding support from SB 797. MTC was not heard from in a definite statement during 1992 consideration of SB 797, but it was understood that MTC had very serious doubts about fusion with the other two specialized agencies, and certainly was not in active support. In 1993, MTC came out in very active opposition to the Morgan bill, engaging a former state senator, John Foran, to make its case in Sacramento.

The voting memberships of the Air Board and MTC, like ABAG, were made up virtually entirely by locally elected officials. Nonetheless, their permanent professional staffs exercised a measure of influence on their thinking. At the staff level, ABAG's Executive Director, Revan Tranter, who was concerned about his agency's long term viability, was an active supporter of Bay Vision's approach in 1992, assuring both the ABAG's executive board and the general assembly that annual savings of at least $2 million would be achieved through a merger. In 1993, reflecting the desires of his membership, he worked primarily on Valerie Brown's AB 398. The staff chiefs of the Air Board and MTC respectively, Milton Feldstein and Lawrence Dahms, were evidently more inclined throughout the exercise to see perils to their organizations in consolidation and in unified planning, rather than to see strengthened effectiveness.

By gaining the approval of the Assembly Local Government and Ways and Means Committees, and 45-31 majority support on the floor of the Assembly, Senate Bill 797 (Morgan) went further in the Legislature in 1992 than even its supporters expected. The Assembly successes in the end were largely due to the intense and positive intervention of Speaker Willie Brown. In the uproarious and rivalrous final days of the legislative session Brown put himself squarely behind the bill, perhaps partly because he was approached by a strong Bay Vision delegation spearheaded by Oakland freshman Assemblywoman Barbara Lee, partly because he identified it as a "district bill" coming from his own home San Francisco area and he had favored such legislation for twenty years, and partly he may have taken it up as an arm in his struggle with the Governor.

On the Senate side, the Morgan bill got through the Local Government Committee, but it then failed on the Senate floor in the hours of the session on the night of August 31 by a vote of 20 to 16, bringing to an end the first Bay Vision run for legislative approval.45

Governor Wilson never clearly stated his intentions toward SB 797 in 1992. But its limitation to one region within the state, its acceptance of non-elected regional commission members, its "prescriptive approach"44 and its absorption of the heavily state-linked Air Board, clearly did not
represent his conception of growth management in California. It seems likely that if the Senate had approved the Morgan bill, the Governor would have vetoed it, thus ending its life one stage later. However, the signals emanating from his office were ambiguous, and Joe Bodovitz later suggested that Governor Wilson would have signed the Bay Vision bill in 1992 if the Bay Area Council's large corporation leaders had vigorously urged him to do so once it was on his desk.

IV. THE 1993 CHAPTER OF BAY AREA REGIONALISM, AND REFLECTIONS ON THE COMMISSION'S DILEMMAS AND ITS CONTRIBUTION

Bay Area Regional measures in Sacramento in 1993

The Bay Vision Action Coalition met several times in the autumn of 1992 after the legislative session, and agreed with no dissent to continue work in the next session. Senator Morgan let the group know she would continue as lead sponsor of the bill, which for 1993 was renumbered SB 153.

Lobbyist Ken Emanuels, a specialist in representing cities and public interest groups in Sacramento, whose work had been important in the greater-than-expected success in the 1992 session, told the BVAC that in 1992 nine months were devoted to getting an agreed text of a bill, leaving only three months for advocating it in the Assembly and Senate. He hoped that in 1993 there would be early agreement on the bill's contents and a longer period for advocacy in 1993. The BVAC meetings of this autumn period in 1992 reflected concern about whether to launch a wide reconsultation of friends and adversaries and to re-write the bill for 1993 based on the results, or to stick substantially with the existing text and get the legislative advocacy work started earlier, as Emanuels was recommending.

The latter path was followed, but in the process of reaching it, an extraordinary intervention by convenor Rod Diridon was effectively ignored. At the BVAC meeting of December 11, 1992 Diridon said dramatically that he believed that the bill as written could never overcome the defenses of the smaller cities. The solution for this, he said, and particularly for the vexatious problem of allocating representation on the board, was to make a radical shift to a directly elected board, with, for example, two members to be elected from each Assembly district in the region. Diridon indicated that he was not ready to repeat his earlier level of effort for an approach that he saw as sure to lose, but would do everything he could to help a reshaped plan go forward. The group neither swung into immediate debate of Diridon's point, nor adopted it. This was the last meeting that Supervisor Diridon came to, and with it his visible participation in Bay Vision affairs effectively ended.

The presidential election of November 1992 heartened supporters of more active public policy, but much more importantly, the California recession and budgetary crisis of 1992 persisted into 1993. By this period, Bay Vision was working in an atmosphere very different from the thriving economic and budgetary situation of 1989 when the exercise was launched.

SB 153 (Morgan), received narrow approval by the Senate Local Government Committee on May 5, 1993 and was ready for the Senate floor, with only one change from the 1992 version — the Regional Commission's membership was reduced to 37. At about the same time, Chairman Heyman accepted a senior Interior Department appointment in the Clinton Administration. He said goodbye to BVAC at its May 6 meeting and left the Bay Vision scene. In July, Sen. Morgan, her prospects in office curtailed by term limits, announced that she would resign her Senate seat in August to join a private group being formed to promote Silicon Valley. Sen. Nicholas Petris, Democrat of Oakland, agreed to serve as substitute author of SB 153. However, neither he nor the Bay Vision group could see any
fresh Senate votes on the horizon for the bill —indeed a vote had been lost with Sen. Morgan’s departure—and so SB 153 (Petris) languished without being brought to the Senate floor for a vote for the rest of the session in 1993.

At the end of the 1993 session, the complicated EERA package of planning and infrastructure renewal bills was similarly stalled. BVAC saw the EERA enterprise as a friendly one, and indeed thought that SB 157 might possibly move through the Senate in its wake, but EERA was hurt when one of its chief sponsors, Assembly Local Government Committee Chairman, Sam Farr, D.-Santa Cruz, left the California Legislature for the U.S. Congress. Two major components of the EERA faced a statewide referendum on the November 1984 ballot, and pessimism that the public would endorse a massive infrastructural bond issue and easier local spending requirements also sapped EERA’s momentum.

However, a bill embodying the ABAG General Assembly approach to regional matters, far less stringent than that of Bay Vision, came into the field in 1993, and at the end of the session in September it dominated center stage. Assembly Bill 398 was sponsored by freshman Assembly Democrat Valerie Brown, who until November 1992 had been a Sonoma City Councilor and Mayor, and a North Bay opponent of the Bay Vision recommendations, which she saw as as coercive with regard to local governments. AB 398 (V. Brown) was largely based on the Platform on Growth Management produced by ABAG’s Sisk Committee and endorsed by the ABAG General Assembly on October 29, 1992. Embodying the views primarily of small city elected officials apprehensive about Bay Vision regionalism, AB 398 recognized the problem of sprawl and the need for greater coordination in planning and land use decisions. However, it maintained that a strategy to handle them could be devised and carried out voluntarily among existing local governments on a sub-regional (essentially, county) basis, without major institutional changes such as a unified regional commission. The ABAG Executive Board, with the addition of some non-voting members drawn from the public, was to be the key region-wide decision-making body, but the ABAG General Assembly, with its small city preponderance, would be the arbiter of conflicts, such as those that might arise with MTC.

For many committed regionalists in the Bay Vision scheme of things the Valerie Brown bill was a proposal of weak regional arrangements put forward in order to defeat stronger ones. But it also gathered up and stated clearly the points of Bay Vision’s adversaries, thus raising the possibility of negotiating a compromise. This was helped along by what came to be the regular participation in BVAC meetings of Barbara Waldman, a Sunnyvale City Councilor and one of the small city questioners of the Bay Vision approach. With Bay Vision’s own SB 153 under open seige by MTC and making no progress in the Legislature, with Councilor Waldman playing a helpful intermediary role, and with perhaps a nudge from Speaker Willie Brown, discussions on amending AB 398 to make it more acceptable to Bay Vision supporters became concrete and active by August.

Larry Orman of the Greenbelt Alliance was the central player on the Bay Vision side of the negotiations, working with John Latimer of Assemblywoman Brown’s staff, while Revan Tranter and Gary Binger of the ABAG staff pitched in very substantially. Interestingly (and parallel to the 1991 contrasts between the ABAG RPC approach and that of Bay Vision), Assemblywoman Brown was willing to amend her bill’s policy content to a remarkable degree, including adding detailed calls for compact growth and urban limit lines. But Bay Vision could not bring into AB 398 its claims for institutional changes, such as for consolidating MTC, ABAG and the Air Board, for making representation more closely reflect population, and for eventually requiring local and sub-regional plans to conform to the regional-level plan. Interestingly, however, under AB 398, MTC’s regional transportation planning would have been linked and subordinated to ABAG’s broader planning work, a positive development.
AB 398 (V.Brown) as amended—the process went so actively that a printed version was never available before the end of the session—clearly presented Bay Vision Action Coalition people with the classic dilemma of whether half a loaf is better than none. Although inadequate in itself, would it be a stepping stone to more progress later, or would it take the steam out of reform efforts and obstruct more meaningful changes that otherwise might become possible in the future, perhaps in a more favorable economic situation and with a more favorable Governor? All concerned had vivid memories of the years of stagnation after the failure of the Knox bills, a failure often attributed to perfectionism on the part of wavering supporters. At the 1993 fork in the road, the Greenbelt Alliance, and of course the senior ABAG staff, were ready to express support for the amended AB 398 when it came up before the Senate Appropriations Committee on September 2. The BAC and the city of San Jose, after deliberating internally and with their BVAC partners, maintained their opposition to the Brown bill.

As matters worked out, in the Senate Appropriation Committee hearing, Sen. Marian Bergeson in the chair sent AB 398 back to its Senate substantive committee, Local Government, on the grounds that the amendments worked out with Bay Vision had changed it significantly since the earlier Local Government Committee approval. This meant that the bill will be carried over to the second year of the session, and legislative action on it can begin again in January 1994. 1994 will be both a budget session and an election year; neither of these are auspicious for legislation on complicated subjects like growth management.

BVAC, quite an abbreviated group in its last session, met on September 10 for a post-mortem on the 1993 session and on the last plays surrounding Valerie Brown's AB 398 which had drawn BVAC participants into diverging positions. All agreed that Bay Vision could congratulate itself on the civility and mutual circulation of information which its members had practiced even as their positions had separated. It was also agreed that BVAC as an organization—always a very informal one—should consider itself to be suspended for at least the moment. It was left that the Greenbelt Alliance, the Bay Area Council and the city of San Jose would get together later in the autumn to discuss whether continued regionalist activity was justified, and whether or not there remained grounds for working together. Project Manager Bodovitz wrote a reflective memorandum on September 22 to BVAC members and the Bay Vision 2020 Commissioners bringing them up-to-date on these developments, and reviewing the principal factors in this outcome of the Bay Vision effort. He highlighted that "there is little public sense of the region as a community." Few resident feel they are part of a coherent regional economy, he observed "And there appears to be increasing fragmentation,—suburbs wanting to distance themselves from inner city issues—rather than a sense of we're-all-in-this-together." Moreover, Bodovitz added tellingly, that although the public sees many problems, it does not see government as able to bring solutions.

The Bay Vision 2020 Commission's contribution

From the point of view of citizens in another American region, what are the lessons to be drawn from Bay Vision 2020?

1. The bromide that this particular kind of reform depends on a committed state governor working in its favor was certainly confirmed. Many Bay Vision 2020 Commission members, when they gathered in December 1989, probably implicitly expected a Democratic Governor in 1990, and started off under the agreeable assumption that the recipient of their work would be predisposed in its favor. Since this was a San Francisco Bay group, it would be easy to visualize through much of 1990 that they were writing for gubernatorial candidate and former San Francisco Mayor Dianne Feinstein, a generally promising circumstance. Some Commission members may well have thought Republican Pete Wilson would be elected; that was not an adverse prospect since Wilson is a moderate, and San
Diego, where he had been mayor, led the state in regional growth management. But once elected, Wilson found himself preoccupied with California’s severe recession and budget crisis and he was not able to be responsive on such a long-range topic as the reforms raised by Bay Vision. For the Commission, this evolution in the Governor’s office was something of a worst-case outcome, and of course was a matter entirely beyond Bay Vision’s power to predict at the outset.

2. Putting the primary focus on creating a new regional institution (the merged MTC, ABAG, and Air Board), rather than concentrating on substantive policy reforms (for example, urban limit lines or requiring high-density construction at public transportation nodes), was a key internal decision in the Commission’s work, although it was a gradual bend, and not a sharp turn. It was the “new institution” feature of the Bay Vision recommendations that at least on the surface provoked much of the defensive response and the heaviest opposition from local elected officials. It could plausibly be said to have brought about the defeat of SB 797 in the California Senate in August 1992.

The reform of institutions (“governance”) was Bay Vision’s point of contrast with the 1991 work of ABAG’s “Framework” text worked out by the Regional Planning Committee under Tom Powers. The approach of “reform the institutions first” also contrasted with the thinking of Sherman Lewis, city planning professor at Hayward State University and Sierra Club leader, now a member of the BART board, who has been active in this field. It is also the central point of difference with AB 398 (V. Brown).

In the Bay Vision 2020 Commission’s internal life, the focus on institutional reform was the soft path, which permitted the Commission to avoid confronting conflict-laden substantive questions which would have been very difficult to work through and to agree upon in the relatively short time available. But in the world external to the Commission itself, the institutional focus meant an attack on the hard point of LEO resistance. In the negative environment of a recession and a preoccupied or unsympathetic governor’s office, that resistance proved too strong to overcome in 1992 and 1993.

But, in defense of Bay Vision it has to be asked, without institutional changes, would substantive reform actually take place? How would new directions have been made real, or enforced in case of need? Without achieving back-up by new and appropriate mechanisms, Bay Vision’s policy recommendations, for example, more intense use of central land, urban limit lines and better public transportation, would be merely hortatory. ABAG’s 1991 RPC statement and its 1970 plan for city-centered growth had been no more than that, and the approach of AB 398 as amended, is very close to being similarly toothless counsels of wisdom. Existing legislation with slight institutional structures or light enforcement powers, such as the Fair Housing laws, and perhaps even the new Congestion Management system, appear to have amounted more to words than deeds. They are showing few signs of real effectiveness against the sprawl and disaggregation of the metropolitan city.

What the local elected officials who dug in as guardians of the status quo really objected to was perhaps not just a new governmental institution with which they would have to share power, but real and enforceable change in the region’s direction of development from sprawl to city-centered growth. In that sense, the local officials and their allies had to be confronted squarely. In calling for significant institutional adjustments, Bay Vision was choosing to do that, and choosing to insist on meaningful and effective reform, rather than contenting itself with preaching. It meant spurning an easy and verbal success, indeed it meant accepting an initial setback in 1992, and a real possibility of ultimate failure. But mounting a patient and sustained attack on a hard point of resistance may nonetheless be a better policy for the long run than accepting early compromise. The right answer to this dilemma depends on unpredictable future events, which means that there is no clear right answer. This is, of course, the issue on which BVAC split, quite possibly temporarily, in September 1993, when the Greenbelt Alliance
supported the amended AB 398 (V. Brown), and the Bay Area Council and the city of San Jose declined to do so.

3. Bay Vision's legislative bills have not succeeded so far because, despite the steady moderating, even damping, influence of the leadership on the group's discussion, the goals of SB 797 and SB 153 have been too ambitious, rather than insufficient. (Ironically, AB 398 (V. Brown), opposed by San Jose and the BAC, and perhaps by the governor, may fail because it asks for too little.)

Assuming that good work was done by a middle stage, as BVAC in fact did good work, what could Bay Vision 2020 have done differently to bring the legislature to accept its level of ambition, and to enfranchise a provisional Regional Commission with a mandate to do a comprehensive nine-county umbrella plan in a city-centered framework?

Three steps might have helped, although the third of them carries risks:

- In retrospect, it was a mistake to exclude sitting locally elected officials from the Commission. A handful of them among the Commissioners, including both large city and small city officials, selected for reputation and credibility among the entire body of LEO's could, if they had been convinced of the regionalist argument in the course of debate, have gone a long way to meet counter-arguments and soften resistance from the local government leaders. Well chosen LEO participants could also have brought to the Commission's meetings more nuts-and-bolts knowledge of how communities are run, and of the pressures on working local leaders; that would have been valuable at the Commission stage. (Such LEO's were present at the BVAC stage, but that was not strictly a stage for debate of the basic questions, but rather was expressly labelled as a gathering of people committed to the basic proposition of regional growth management.)

- Opinion polling has indicated regularly that the public at large, is more ready than local elected officials for regional planning and decision-making. Bay Vision never managed to build a bridge to this broad but diffuse sentiment, to tap and shape it into useful forms to bring pressure on the small city LEOs, or at least to demonstrate a countervailing force to their views.

- Bay Vision could have made such a connection to the public by applying its general principles to concrete planning questions now before the region. This would have been a policy of mobilizing public understanding and support by plunging into controversy and conflict. Bay Vision spoke in favor of a greater role for public transportation, but had nothing to say about extending BART to San Francisco Airport (SFO), which in the mind of the public is the public transportation issue of the moment. The BART/SFO connection issue is currently dominated by financial issues which would be greatly eased if the investment were handled in a regional rather than a San Francisco/San Mateo context. The BART/SFO case is itself a concrete positive recommendation for the utility of regional institutions, but the Commission preferred to advocate such institutions in the abstract, a level of argument that did not attract the sustained interest — or active support — of the regional public.

In a second case, the constituent elements of Bay Vision regarded the proposal for a major peripheral toll highway in the East Bay as a potential triumph for sprawl and a disaster for city-centered growth. The toll road proposal was a marvelous teaching example to explain to the public how Bay Vision's thinking operated in a real case, but in fact Bay Vision took no public notice of it. The toll road is now in fact in the process of being defeated piecemeal by the various cities, counties and special purposes agencies along its route. If Bay Vision had taken a stand, it would have proven to be the victorious one, and in the process could both have speeded the outcome on the road proposal, and given Bay Vision a notch on its rifle.
To plunge into current cases to exemplify one’s doctrines, is a risky approach, beyond doubt, partly because it makes vividly clear how the regional perspective could “interfere” in what otherwise would be a county or local matter, but Bay Vision’s outcome to date indicates that aloofness also has its costs.

4. In the overall Bay Vision process that includes both the RIF/Diridon antecedents and the later BVAC stage, the actual eighteen-month, thirty-two member Bay Vision 2020 Commission itself was not as important, nor its discussions as conclusive, as doubtless appeared to some of its members at the time. From a well articulated consensus among enlightened citizens it is a very long road to actual effects, in this case, to a legislated statute.

Greenbelt Alliance convenor Larry Orman, early in the history recounted here, said that the goal of establishing the 2020 Commission was not decisions, or outcomes, which were the nominal goals at the time. Rather, he said, the purpose of convoking the Commission was an earlier one in a longer process. Combined with the media coverage it would generate, it was a form of public education, diffusion of concern, of spreading awareness of the problems, and enlisting advocates. One of the goals was the recruitment of the Commissioners themselves as long term activists, and advocates who would help in the legislative phase. This observation seemed to this listener at the time to be a real falling back from the goal of immediate effectiveness on the part of the commission. The Bay Vision Commission was made to seem a relatively small step among many in a long campaign. But in fact, Orman was entirely right.

The Commission members were very capable people who accepted service on the body freely, and with spontaneous interest in the issues, but the Commission was heavily steered by its leadership and its convenors. The second stage, the BVAC, was basically more decisional and important, although it was less open and involved fewer people. The blue ribbon Bay Vision Commission was really a sounding board, an apparatus, even just a name, for putting the subjects of regionalism and city-centered growth back into play after a long hiatus. The Commission members' job was creating public and media discussion, injecting their subject into the fractional awareness of millions of citizens over a sustained period of months. The Commission was not really the dynamic, problem-confronting, solution-devising body which it appeared to be, and which some of its members may have enjoyed thinking it to be.

Does this mean that the Bay Vision 2020 Commission was not worthwhile, that the effort could have started more efficiently at the more operational BVAC stage? No. The thirty-two member Commission was a valuable laboratory and test bench for a continuous thinking process by the convenors and the leadership, and to a limited extent, some of the commissioners themselves. Its existence forced the accomplishment of certain physical tasks, like getting its report written and circulated. The excellent Bay Vision report (in annex) then took on a life of its own, and became a kind of landmark and point of reference.

In addition to the Commission’s base-broadening and educational effects, and to the effective use it made of the inert last year of the Deukmejian administration, mounting the commission, laborious and lengthy operation that it was, was in effect creating a speaking voice, a letterhead for the message, a board of trustees and a principal for whom the BVAC was working. Lacking an established regional leader, such as a Eugene McAteer or a John Knox, ready and able to float such a set of proposals on his or her own initiative, the Commission filled that role — and it was not a trivial one — admirably. To attribute the proposals to the Bay Vision 2020 Commission was less complicated, more comprehensible
and recognizable than trying to explain that they came from no government and no political party, but from the Bay Area Council, the Greenbelt Alliance, and a fraction of local officials.

The metropolitan reforms that the Bay Vision 2020 Commission calls for at a minimum are reasonable, and more likely are really needed by the region. The Commission played an important, positive and civic role in opening the question, getting media coverage for it, and starting public discussion, primarily in the Bay Area, but also statewide. Those considering launching a similar agenda in other cities should give serious consideration to emulating the Bay Vision 2020 Commission as an early step and a base for their effort.

The whole Bay Vision process was taken up and operated on the basis of putting one foot before the other, and seeing in a cheerful and constructive way where the path might lead. Because the problems of sprawl and dis-coordination that Bay Vision is struggling against are real, each footstep indeed showed a meaningful place to put the next step, and the path continued to lead forward until the end of the 1993 session, when the group split in its judgment of the half loaf that the Legislature seemed to be offering. The outlook for the immediate next legislative year, 1994, is clouded and rather negative for the Bay Vision bill, and only a little more promising for the watered-down AB 398. However, the recession-based slowdown in construction has provided a breather in the need to combat damaging development on an urgent footing, and the possibilities for success in 1995, or a little beyond that, seem better. It would be premature to conclude that the game, which the RIF and Rod Diridon played an important role in getting started, is over. In this pragmatic, semi-experimental and still ongoing process, the 1989-1991 strategy of a consensus-seeking blue ribbon commission, Bay Vision 2020, proved itself a helpful opener.

NOTES


11. Marge Gibson Haskell, ABAG Regional Planning Committee (RPC); remark during meeting. RPC Chairman Tom Powers has said the same thing.


15. See Jones and Mogulof citations immediately above.


Sanders, Senior Consultant.


22. The classic and very distinguished account is Mel Scott, The San Francisco Bay Area, A Metropolis in Perspective, 1985, cited above.

23. Scott, Mel, cited above.

24. The Joint Exercise of Powers Act authorizes two or more governments, including state and federal agencies, to exercise jointly any power that they could exercise separately. Victor Jones, 1993, cited above.

25. Conversation with Victor Jones


28. See California State Assembly and Senate Studies referred to above in notes 18 and 19.


30. Said in a symposium on Regional Government: How to Make it Work in the South Bay. Sponsored by the San Jose Mercury News, with extensive remarks, including this one by Peter Giles, published in the San Jose Mercury News, Sunday May 12, 1991, page 5C.

31. Joe Bodovitz interjected the following into a May 1991 Panel discussion sponsored by the San Jose Mercury News: "So the idea of livable central cities is not something we can just assume. It's going to take a lot of work on schools, crime, homelessness, drugs, in the higher density areas. A lot of work has to go not only into the developing fringe, but to make older parts of big and small cities livable, or none of this is going to work. It's therefore very important that inner-city people, people of color, who will be increasingly important in the bay region, be vigorous participants in the decision making. The changing demographics of the region are an important part of all that we are talking about." San Jose Mercury News, Sunday May 12, p.5C.


34. League of Women Voters, as cited above.
35. See this aspect of Project Manager Bodovitz’s remarks in note 26, above.

36. Sara Conner, Paul De Falco, Reid Gustafson, Mary Handel, Aileen Hernandez, Ira Michael Heyman, Lynette Lee, Pamela Lloyd, Bob Mang, Richard Rios, Scott Wylie. Per list of BVAC Interim Steering Committee members appended to August 21, 1991 letter from Chairman Heyman to Councilmember Shirley Sisk, Chair, Legislative and Governmental Organization Committee of ABAG.

37. Published as Strategic Growth: Taking Charge of the Future, a Blueprint for California. Report of the the Growth Management Council to Governor Wilson. State of California, Governor's Office of Planning and Research. January, 1993. The Growth Management Council recommended State support to localities in financing infrastructure projects that met state guidelines, the development of an Integrated State Plan and changes in the local general plan, which is to be expanded and re-named the Local Comprehensive Plan, reforms tending to strengthen Councils of Governments which are seen as folding in the planning functions of regional transportation agencies, CEQA reform and streamlining of permit issuance, and possible reallocation of the growth in local sales tax receipts in ways that would counteract the fiscalization of land use.


41. Richard Sybert, head of the Office of Planning and Research and Governor Wilson’s principal staffer for growth management matters, listed this as a drawback of Bay Vision’s proposals in a January 1993 letter to the San Francisco Chronicle. The expression evidently refers to a regional government’s exercise of authority over local governments.