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**Bay Area Council Strongly Commends
California Senate Leadership for Today's Comprehensive Bills to
Combat Sprawl, Reduce Traffic, and Maintain Open Space and Farmland**

Bills Embody Nearly a Decade of Work by the Bay Area Council

SAN FRANCISCO, February 23, 2005 – Today the Bay Area Council announced its support and appreciation for the package of bills – SB 521, 575 and 832 – unveiled today by the California State Senate leadership. The three bills represent, in large part, the policies the Bay Area Council has developed and advocated over the past decade.

The first of the three bills, SB 521, authorizes a new financial mechanism to support transit-oriented development (concentrated mixed-use development located near transportation facilities). SB 575 would allow housing projects denied approval at the local level the ability to appeal to the court system. Courts could allow a project to move forward if the project is consistent with local General Plans, as well as zoning. It would reduce the power of “NIMBY-ism.” The final bill, SB 832, would strengthen the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to support “infill housing.” “Infill housing” refers to creating new housing in existing urban areas, which offers an alternative to new developments on open space and farmland.

“If we manage to pass this package of bills, I may be out of a job,” said Jim Wunderman, President and CEO of the Bay Area Council. “Today was an exhilarating day. These bills start a conclusive dialogue with stakeholders towards solving some of the most pressing problems facing residents in California. While we expect amendments as the process continues, all signs point to success. I would add that the Bay Area Council is very pleased to have its thinking about housing, transportation and smart growth recognized in such a high-profile manner.”

The bills – introduced and announced by Senate President pro Tem Don Perata, along with Senate Transportation and Housing Committee Chair Tom Torlakson and Senate Environmental Quality Committee Chair Alan Lowenthal – complement a session held earlier in the day by California Resources’ Secretary Mike Chrisman working to build consensus on CEQA improvement.

“The backing of such influential senate leaders, coupled with the efforts of Secretaries McPeak and Chrisman in Governor Schwarzenegger’s Administration, demonstrates a real commitment by the elected leadership of California to implement this agenda,” concluded Wunderman.

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Bay Area Council

Founded in 1945, the Bay Area Council (www.bayareacouncil.org) develops and drives regional public policy initiatives and researches critical infrastructure issues. Led by CEOs, the Bay Area Council presents a strong, united voice for more than 275 of the largest employers throughout the Bay Area region in promoting economic prosperity and quality of life. Jim Wunderman has served as president and CEO of the Bay Area Council since April of 2004.