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RESIDENTS HAVE STRONG SENSE OF REGIONAL IDENTITY AND SUPPORT SINGLE REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCY, BAY AREA COUNCIL POLL SHOWS

BAY AREA, April 14, 2008 — Today the Bay Area Council released poll results that show a strong sense of regional identity among Bay Area residents coupled with surprising support for some new regional agencies and opposition to others. Seventy-nine percent of residents strongly identify themselves by their Bay Area identity, whereby they “hold certain shared values and concerns with other residents throughout the region,” according to the 2008 *Bay Area Council Poll* of 601 residents. The results were consistent throughout the region, with Contra Costa residents feeling the most strongly, at 87 percent, and San Mateo residents feeling the weakest, at 72 percent.

Some in the region, including the Bay Area Council, have advocated greater regional control of important planning responsibilities. When asked generally if they would prefer a single comprehensive regional planning agency to manage the region’s growth versus the existing government structure, the plurality (49 percent) favored a single agency while 38 percent preferred existing arrangements. These results were consistent throughout the region outside of San Francisco where the majority of residents (47 percent) prefer the current structure and 44 percent would like to see a single regional planning agency.

The Bay Area already has regional agencies responsible for transportation, housing, air quality, water quality of the bay and usage of bay front land. A majority of residents think that it would be a good idea to combine these various regional entities into a single super agency. Fifty-one percent think it would be a good idea to combine them while 39 percent did not.

“As just one example, the Bay Area has over two dozen public transit agencies which is frustrating to residents who just want to get from one place to another and care little for territorial fiefdoms,” said Jim Wunderman, president and CEO of the Bay Area Council. “It’s time to look at consolidations where possible.”

Bay Area residents appear to have an appetite for some new regional agencies, but results show that regional control is not a panacea for Bay Area problems. In terms of specific planning areas, residents think that public transit and airport improvements should be the responsibility of a regional agency versus individual cities and counties. Sixty-five percent of residents think the expansion, coordination and operation of public transit should rest with a regional agency, while 28 percent think individual localities should be responsible. Airport coordination and improvements should also be managed by a regional agency, according to 65 percent of respondents.

“There’s an awful lot of logic to follow examples set by other parts of the world in coordinating airports and public transit,” said Wunderman.

Residents appear to prefer local control of other planning areas, often the status quo. Residents overwhelmingly support local control of housing and commercial development planning and

approval at 73 percent and 75 percent respectively. Likewise, 59 percent would have individual cities manage homeless programs, rather than come up with a Bay Area-wide strategy.

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About the Bay Area Poll

A total of 601 residents of the nine-county Bay Area were surveyed in English and Spanish by Field Research Corporation during the period of March 4-14, 2008. Survey respondents were selected using a random probability sampling technique that gives all residents with telephones (listed or not) an equal chance of being selected for the survey. The sample was stratified to obtain representative samples in each of six Bay Area regions: Alameda County, Contra Costa County, San Francisco County, San Mateo County, Santa Clara County and the North Bay counties of Marin, Napa, Solano and Sonoma. After the completion of interviewing, the sample was weighted to conform to actual population estimates of the nine-county Bay Area. Findings are subject to a sampling error of plus or minus 4 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

About the 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 hundreds of major employers throughout the Bay Area region whom employ more than 501,000 workers, or 1 of every six private sector employees in the Bay Area..