

# WEEKLY FLASH

## Housing Committee Debates Major Legislative Reform

Two weeks ago, Mary Nichols, the new Chair of the California Air Resources Board, told our members that she thought [Senate Bill 375](#) by Senator Steinberg was an interesting way to change land-use development patterns to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Moving quickly, this week, our Housing Committee debated SB 375 in full force.

Committee Chair, Michael Covarrubias, Chairman and CEO of TMG Partners, led a meeting with presentations by proponents and those opposed unless the bill is amended. While the bill is complex and merits study by anyone interested in housing, at a basic level it ties regional housing planning and transportation funding to a standard of reducing total vehicle miles traveled.



Richard Lyon, of the [California Building Industry Association](#), pointed out that California faces two problems: not enough housing, causing the affordability crisis; and, not enough housing in the right place, causing traffic and environmental consequences. We should be careful to not exacerbate the affordability crisis with sweeping changes when the new housing development the bill would affect represents only 1% of the total housing stock each year. In short, small environmental benefits could result in huge affordability problems. The following amendments would make his organization much more likely to support SB 375: guarantee actual zoning changes result from the new plans generated by SB 375; restrict voter referendums outlawing housing on huge swaths of previously approved land; and include “anti-NIMBY” legislation preventing city councils from rejecting projects if those projects meet adopted plans and have gotten all other city-required approvals. Proponents, including Bill Craven from [Senator Steinberg’s](#) office and Tom Adams from the [California League of Conservation Voters](#), told members that SB 375 would actually provide large-scale bureaucratic relief and accelerated building timelines for projects that fit the bills parameters, especially “infill” projects. They also said that the bill would require regions like the Bay Area to plan housing for all expected population growth (currently the Bay Area has a more than 200,000 unit planned housing deficit) greatly boosting the housing supply.

Everyone agreed the bill still needs work and the Committee agreed to push for amendments in next year’s session to get SB 375 into a position the Bay Area Council could endorse.

### Article of the Week

This [Contra Costa Times](#) article explores efforts to unionize remaining Bay Area journalists.

### Quote of the Week

*“The West Coast is the gateway to the world, and access to good transportation is the name of the game.”* – John Hummer, deputy secretary of Goods Movement in the California Business, Transportation and Housing Agency, on a [massive new “logistics” facility](#) coming to Stockton.

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