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Northern Alameda County Group

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March 4, 2010

City of Albany
1000 San Pablo Ave.
Albany, CA 94706

Members of the Sustainability Committee
Members of the Planning and Zoning Commission
Members of the City Council

Re: Albany Climate Action Plan

Dear Members of the City Council, Sustainability Committee and Planning and Zoning Commission,

The Sierra Club Group supports Albany's proactive efforts in passing a Climate Action Plan (CAP). We recommend passage of this CAP and recommend significant review in one year's time. We find that the document is a good start and demonstrates that the City has begun taking climate change and Greenhouse Gas reduction (GHG reduction) in a serious way. The Sierra Club commends the City of Albany for its initiative. At the same time, we feel that the CAP could be improved by addressing a few significant shortcomings:

- The CAP should explicitly restate the 25% goal of GHG reduction recommended by Council.
- The CAP should not use carbon offsets to attempt to make up for plan shortfalls.
- The CAP should include San Pablo Avenue in its emissions inventory. Albany uses San Pablo Ave. as its north south arterial and many daily trips are made on San Pablo Ave by residents and Albany business suppliers and customers. Albany has an important role to play in regional climate issues working with other jurisdictions on the regulation of greenhouse gases.

Also, the Climate Action Plan leaves the details of implementation for a number of strategies open. Here are some strategies that we strongly support and feel must become part of the CAP implementation phase:

- 1) Require mandatory energy upgrades to buildings at the time of sale (Measure BE 2.3) to achieve the building energy efficiency goals of the CAP.
- 2) Explore a citywide Parking Permit program. Free parking is a huge disincentive against people using other, more energy efficient modes of transportation and costs the City substantial lost revenue.
- 3) Enact a utility tax to fund certain aspects of the CAP. We fully support such a tax since it is linked directly to energy use. Such taxes can be regressive, so care must be taken in implementation so as to prevent this, such as including a lifeline low income exemption. Such an exemption would apply to low-income customers whose energy use does not exceed a cap determined by household size.

4) Reform Albany's off-street parking requirements which now encourage automobile usage, and may divert money away from energy efficiency aspects of building projects by requiring that significant money be spent on parking spaces.

5) Explore the possibility of bringing a BART station to Solano Ave. While we understand that BART does not think a new station on Solano Ave. is justified by current and future projected transit demand at this location, we nevertheless think it is a good idea for the City Council in Albany to support this idea, so that the transit agency might reconsider it at some future point in time.

While we are pleased at the progress that has been made on the Climate Action Plan in Albany, we would like to help improve the Plan. We look forward to working with you as the CAP moves towards implementation. Thank you for your time and consideration,

Nick Pilch
Executive Committee Member

Kent Lewandowski
Group Chair
Sierra Club Northern Alameda Group

From: Jeff Bond
Sent: Wednesday, February 24, 2010 10:17 AM
To: 'Clay Larson'; Nicole Almaguer
Cc: Ann Chaney
Subject: RE: Problem with the Announcement of the CAP Mitigated Neg Dec

Clay,

Thanks for your email. Based on the Notice of Intent (NOI), we believe that we need to open the public hearings on the days indicated. We will make the Council aware of the error, and they can decide whether approval of the CAP should be delayed. In the meantime, we will correct the NOI.

Jeff

Jeff Bond, Planning and Building Manager
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Albany, CA 94706
510-528-5769

From: Clay Larson [mailto:clayl@comcast.net]
Sent: Wednesday, February 24, 2010 7:46 AM
To: Nicole Almaguer; Jeff Bond
Cc: Ann Chaney
Subject: Problem with the Announcement of the CAP Mitigated Neg Dec

Folks;

I think that there is a problem with the current announcement of the Initial Study and proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration of Albany's Climate Action Plan (CAP). The announcement states that the public comment period is from February 12 to March 15, 2010, but then adds, "Written comments on the Initial Study and proposed mitigated Negative Declaration should be submitted prior to 5:00 pm on February 15, 2010..." I think that it reasonable to conclude that the latter, incorrect, now passed date and time could discourage people from commenting on the CAP. I think that the only solution here is to prepare a correct announcement and restart the 30-day comment period. Thanks.

Clay