



Memorandum

Date: 03.15.17 **RE:** Citizens Advisory Committee
March 22, 2017

To: Citizens Advisory Committee

From: Jeff Hobson – Deputy Director for Planning Division *JH*

Subject: **ACTION** – Adopt a Motion of Support for the Adoption of Community of Concern Boundaries for San Francisco

Summary

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) has conducted an equity analysis to identify a series of disadvantaged communities or “Communities of Concern (CoCs)” in compliance with federal civil rights and environmental justice laws. MTC prioritizes projects in or serving CoCs for several competitive grants that are distributed through Congestion Management Agencies. As a regional planning authority, MTC’s analysis measured disadvantaged communities at a larger geography – census tracts; however, that methodology does not fully capture many of San Francisco’s disadvantaged communities, which often are part of the same census tract as more affluent neighborhoods. Consequently, projects within or serving these unidentified communities are unable to receive the same level of priority as MTC’s official CoCs for some of the competitive grant awards or inclusion in regional and local planning efforts. Conducting a similar analysis at a more fine-grain level – the census block-group level – more accurately captures San Francisco’s disadvantaged communities, particularly when they are immediately adjacent to more affluent areas. The Board adoption of the updated boundaries will enable these communities to be considered by MTC as official CoCs and increase competitiveness of projects serving those communities during competitive grants.

BACKGROUND

MTC Equity Analysis and Communities of Concern Definitions

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) has conducted an equity analysis for the past several Regional Transportation Plans to comply with federal civil rights and environmental justice laws. The results of this equity analysis have identified a series of disadvantaged communities or “Communities of Concern (CoCs).” The definition of CoC has evolved over the last twenty years to better capture concentrations of low-income, minority communities using various census data. Consequently, as that definition has shifted, alongside changes in urban development and demographics captured with each iteration of the Census, the boundaries of CoCs have also changed.

For additional information, Attachment 1 provides an explanation of the various MTC CoC definitions; Attachment 2 illustrates MTC’s 2013 CoC boundaries in San Francisco; and Attachment 3 illustrates MTC’s 2017 CoC boundaries in San Francisco.

CoCs in Planning and Funding

Projects within CoCs can receive regional transportation funding prioritization: MTC prioritizes projects that are located within or serve CoCs for many of its own competitive grant programs and for the regional grant programs that distribute funds through Congestion Management Agencies (including the Transportation

Authority). These programs include the One Bay Area Grant (OBAG) program, which has funded projects such as the Chinatown Broadway Street Design; and the Lifeline Transportation Program (LTP), which has funded projects that have enhanced Treasure Island bus service and improved the Balboa Park transit station. CoCs are also eligible to receive regional community-based transportation planning grant funding, which recently included the Western Addition Community-Based Transportation Plan. Moreover, some external grant programs, such as the state Active Transportation Program, assign higher scores for projects in disadvantaged communities, and MTC has used its CoC designation as a proxy for this when allowed.

CoC designation can play an important tool for inclusion in Plan Bay Area's investment strategy: MTC is currently working on the update to the Regional Transportation Plan (known as Plan Bay Area 2040 or PBA 2040). This plan identifies targets for the region as it grows in employment and population, including several equity targets. The plan's investment strategy is compiled by assessing proposed projects and programs from across the Bay Area according to how well they meet these targets, and using a benefit-cost assessment. Low-scoring projects need to make a compelling case for inclusion in that investment strategy, or they will be excluded from the plan and subsequently from certain funding opportunities. One of the cases that can be made for low-scoring projects seeking inclusion is that projects improve mobility and reduce emissions in Communities of Concern. For Plan Bay Area 2040, the Southeast Waterfront Transportation Improvements and the Geneva-Harney Bus Rapid Transit and Corridor Improvements were upgraded from low- to medium-performers based on these criteria, and therefore are included in the draft transportation investment strategy.

Neighborhoods within CoCs are included in the Neighborhood Transportation Improvement Program: The Transportation Authority's Prop K sales tax-funded Neighborhood Transportation Improvement Program (NTIP) was developed in response to mobility and equity analysis findings from the San Francisco Transportation Plan and to the public's and Board's desire for more focus on neighborhoods, especially on CoCs and other underserved neighborhoods. NTIP planning funds are specifically available for planning efforts that improve mobility for CoCs or other underserved neighborhoods and vulnerable populations. NTIP planning funds have been used both as match funding for some of the Community-Based Transportation Plan (CBTP)-funded plans (including the Western Addition CBTP) and to independently fully-fund projects in CoCs (such as the Pedestrian Safety in SOMA Youth and Family Zone plans).

SF City and County Agencies use CoC definition in local planning activities: COCs are used in the process of defining the geographic distribution of traffic collisions in terms of equity, including calculating the percent of the city's Vision Zero High-Injury Network that are present in CoCs.

The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency's (SFMTA's) 2014 Muni Equity Strategy was developed in a parallel process using similar data. Though it wasn't derived from MTC's CoC thresholds, the resulting map closely corresponds to the existing and proposed CoC designations.

DISCUSSION

As a *regional* planning authority, MTC's equity analysis measured disadvantaged communities at a larger geography – census tracts; however, that methodology does not fully capture many of San Francisco's disadvantaged communities, which often are part of the same census tract as more affluent neighborhoods. Consequently, projects within or serving these unidentified communities are unable to receive the same level of priority as MTC's official CoCs for some of the competitive grant awards or inclusion in regional and local planning efforts. Conducting a similar analysis at a more fine-grain level –

the census block-group level – more accurately captures San Francisco’s disadvantaged communities, particularly when they are immediately adjacent to more affluent areas.

Block Group Analysis

To capture those smaller pockets of disadvantaged communities in San Francisco that had not been included in MTC’s 2017 CoC definition, we conducted an analysis using the same factors and thresholds as MTC’s analysis, but at the more fine-grained block group level rather than at the broader census tract level. Our analysis was coordinated with the SFMTA, MTC and Planning Department. Any block group meeting MTC’s thresholds that was part of a contiguous set of block groups with a combined population of at least 10,000 residents was added as a CoC. Non-contiguous block groups that together contain less than 10,000 residents were not included in the CoC definition. As a result, one census tract that was identified in MTC’s 2017 CoC definition and had a population of less than 10,000 residents was not included in the San Francisco-specific CoC definition, which was the Sea Cliff neighborhood.

In sum, the proposed San Francisco County CoC definition (Attachment 4) includes the following criteria:

- 1) Census tracts already identified as CoCs per MTC’s 2017 update and with a population of at least 10,000; and
- 2) Contiguous census block groups that meet MTC’s existing threshold analysis and with a population of at least 10,000.

Next Steps: Should the Board adopt the proposed CoC definition for San Francisco, MTC would consider the updated boundaries official and start using those new boundaries for CoC-related scoring of applicable grant programs and CBTP planning grants. Also, MTC will incorporate the updated local boundaries in the next round of the PBA update.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Adopt a motion of support for the adoption of Communities of Concern Boundaries for San Francisco, as requested.
2. Adopt a motion of support for the adoption of Communities of Concern Boundaries for San Francisco, with modifications.
3. Defer action, pending additional information or further staff analysis.

FINANCIAL IMPACTS

The recommended action would have no impact on the adopted Fiscal Year 2016/17 budget.

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a motion of support for the adoption of Communities of Concern Boundaries for San Francisco.

Attachments (4):

1. MTC Communities of Concern Methodology
2. MTC Communities of Concern 2013
3. MTC Communities of Concern 2017
4. Proposed San Francisco Communities of Concern

Attachment 1: MTC Communities of Concern Methodology

MTC Equity Analysis and Communities of Concern Definitions

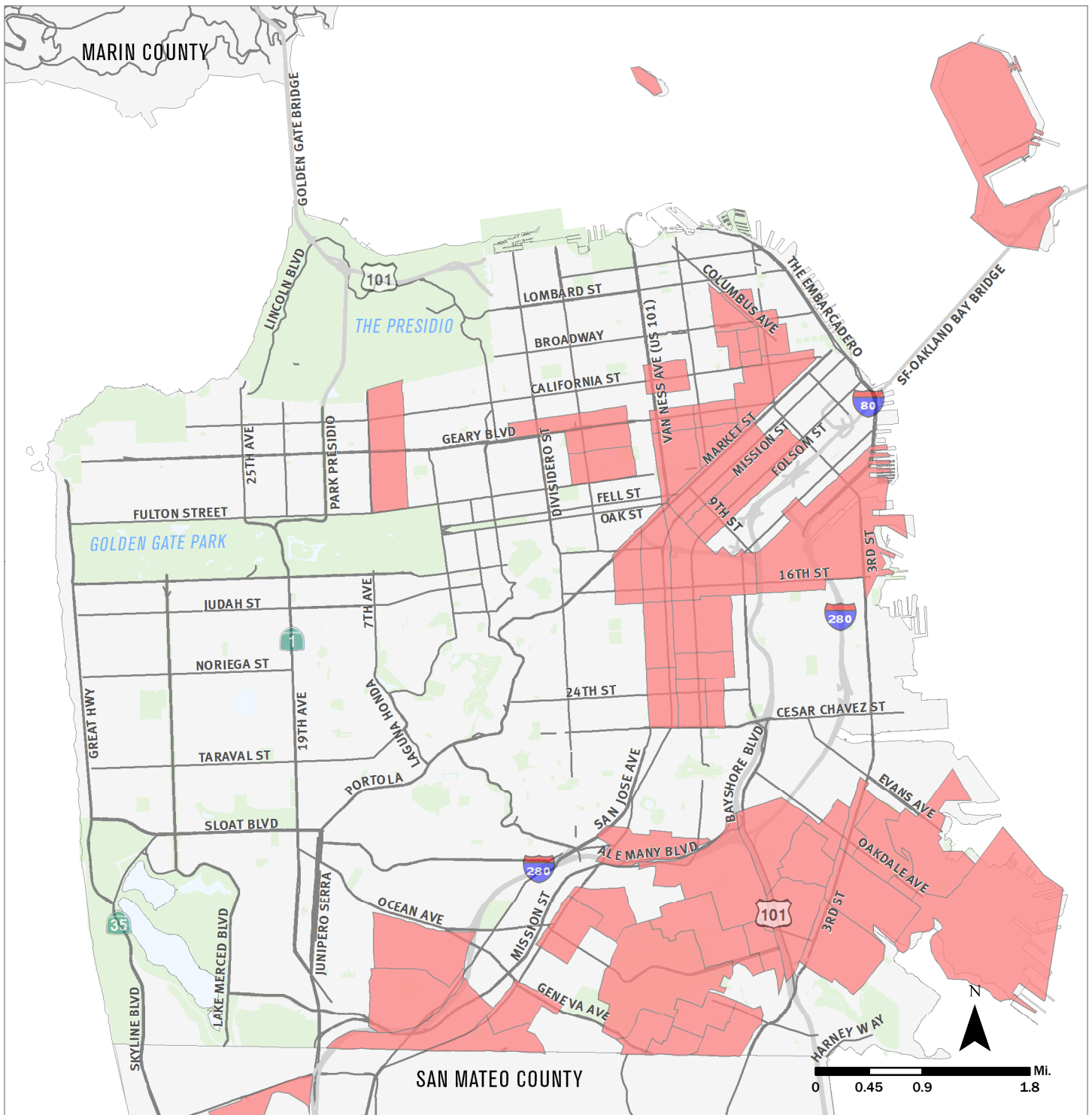
The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) has conducted an equity analysis for the past several Regional Transportation Plans to comply with federal civil rights and environmental justice laws. The results of this equity analysis have identified a series of disadvantaged communities or “Communities of Concern (CoCs).” The definition of CoC has evolved over the last twenty years: the 1999, 2003 and 2007 Regional Transportation Plans defined census tracts with *either* 70% minority or 30% low-income households as CoCs. In 2013, CoCs were defined as any census tract with concentrations of 70% minority population *and* 30% low-income households, *or* census tracts with four or more “disadvantaged factors” (see Table 1).

Table 1: Communities of Concern Framework for Plan Bay Area 2013

Disadvantaged Factor	Concentration Threshold
Minority	70%
Low Income (<200% Federal Poverty Level)	30%
Limited English Proficiency	20%
Zero-Vehicle Household	10%
Seniors 75 Years and Over	10%
People with Disability	25%
Single-Parent Family	20%
Cost-Burdened Renter	15%
<i>CoC is defined either as 1) census tracts with a concentration of both Minority and low income populations; or 2) census tracts with concentrations of any four disadvantaged factors.</i>	
<i>Concentration thresholds are based on one half standard deviation above the regional population’s mean.</i>	

Plan Bay Area 2040 has since updated its definition of CoCs to reflect the changes in Bay Area population. Now, MTC defines CoCs as any census tract that either 1) has both a concentration of minority AND low income households or 2) has a concentration of low-income households and three of the remaining 6 disadvantaged factors. For clarification, the difference in this new definition is that previously communities could meet ANY of four disadvantaged factors; however, now, they must contain at least the low-income concentration and then any other three disadvantaged factors.

Attachment 2 illustrates MTC’s 2013 Communities of Concern boundaries and Attachment 3 illustrates MTC’s 2017 Communities of Concern Boundaries.

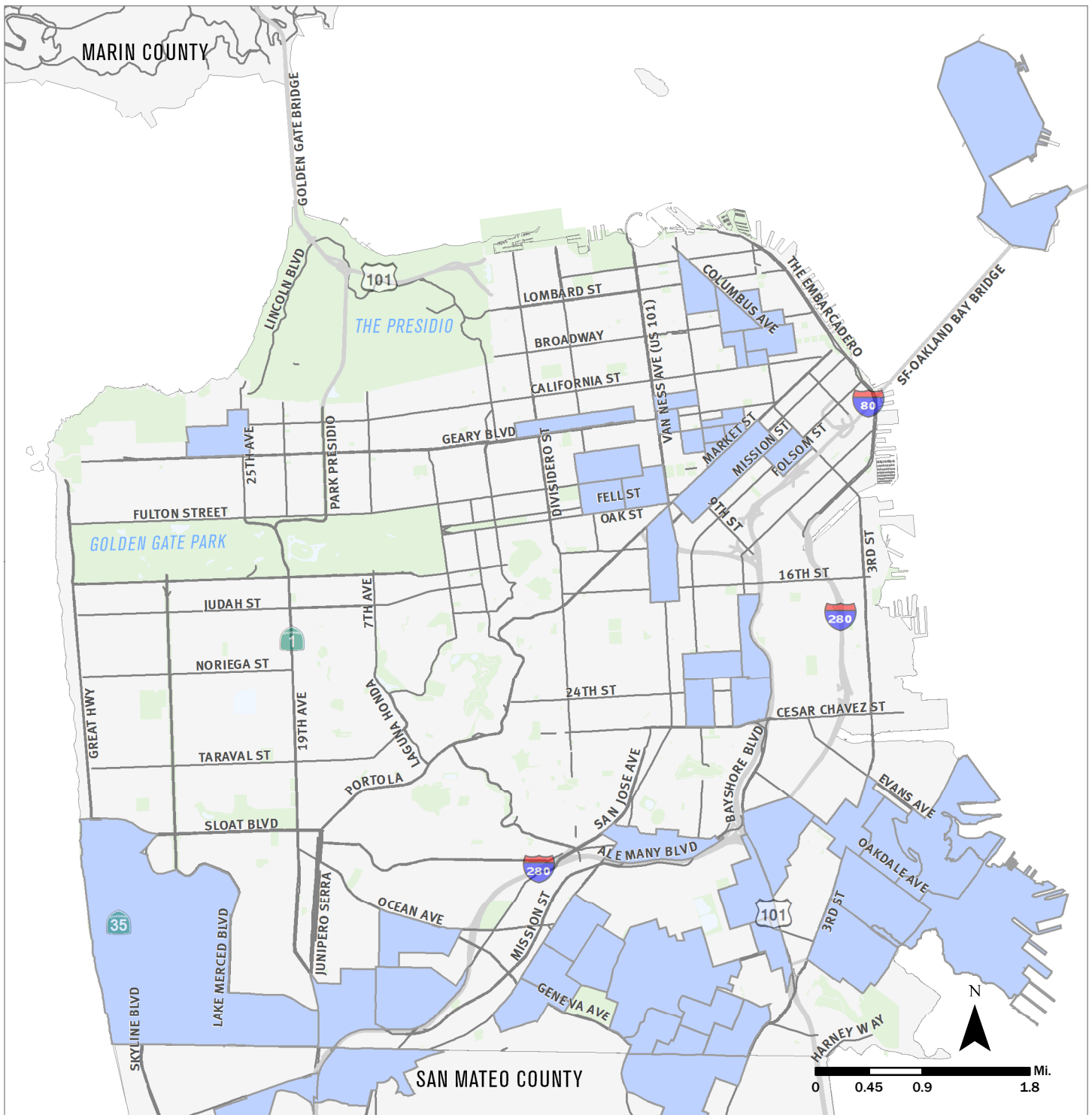


MTC Communities of Concern 2013

■ MTC Communities of Concern 2013
■ Parks and Open Space



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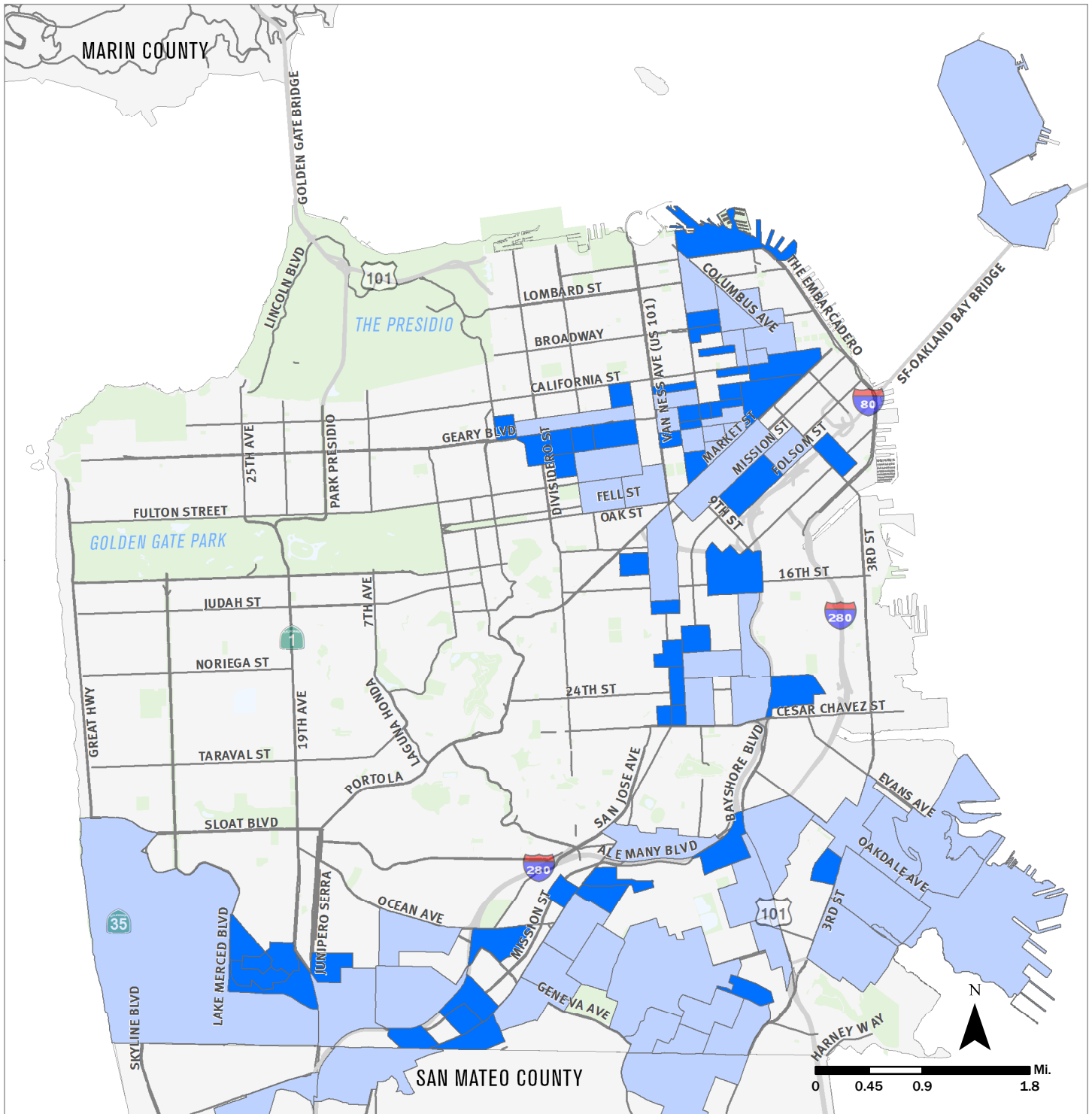


MTC Communities of Concern 2017

- MTC 2017 Communities of Concern
- Parks and Open Space



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Proposed San Francisco Communities of Concern 2017

- SFCTA 2017 supplemental Communities of Concern Boundaries
- MTC 2017 Communities of Concern (Modified)
- Parks and Open Space



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