East Bay Mayors Link Economic Development, Regional Cooperation, and Environmental Innovation: The mayors of Berkeley, Emeryville, Oakland, and Richmond joined the University of California, Berkeley and Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory to sign a Statement of Principles launching the East Bay Green Corridor Partnership, a cooperative effort to lead the world in environmental innovation, emerging green business and industry, green jobs, and renewable energy.

Specifically, the six signatories on the Statement of Principles agreed to hold an annual green economic summit; set quarterly meetings for the directors of economic development, workforce development and technology transfer offices; and to coordinate a major new regional green job training and placement effort. Other joint efforts will be developed. Individual partner efforts are highlighted below.

Berkeley
Over the past several years, Berkeley has regularly been named among the greenest and most sustainable cities in the United States and was recently ranked as one of the top five cities best situated to lead the "Clean Tech" economy. Last year, Berkeley voters passed Measure G, a first in the nation ballot measure directing the City to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 80% by the year 2050. "Berkeley is known as one of the world’s most innovative and creative places, but our economic success is tied directly to the success of our neighbors and our region," said Berkeley Mayor Tom Bates. "It is vitally important that we keep the innovative ideas, companies, and jobs here in our area."

Emeryville
"We share a vision of a green economy that provides jobs for all our people, revenue for our cities, and serves as an environmental center for the nation. We are much better able to make our shared vision a reality if we work together," said Emeryville Mayor Nora Davis. Over the past two decades, Emeryville has emerged as a center for entertainment, retail, technology, and bio-tech companies. It has one of the fastest growing commercial and housing markets in the Bay Area.

Oakland
Oakland was the first city in the nation to initiate a plan outlining steps towards oil independence by 2020 and also the first city in the nation to pass laws replacing plastic and Styrofoam materials in restaurants with compostable materials. In 2007, Oakland allocated $200,000 for green jobs development and training. "This nature of collaboration is crucial to sustain our collective effort to remain a regional leader in the emerging green industry. Uniting these four cities behind this goal will do a great deal to coordinate our business, government and community resources," said Oakland Mayor Ron Dellums.

Richmond
"A green economy which focuses on the triple bottom line of economics, environment and social equity is the greatest opportunity of the twenty-first century to improve the lives of all people. Given the crises the world faces from resource depletion, poverty and species extinction - a green economy is also the only way to reinvigorate our economy while at the same time addressing environmental destruction and social inequity. Cities generate 75% of the carbon emissions. Cities like ours are where the problem must be solved," said Richmond Mayor Gayle McLaughlin.

Richmond's abundance of industrial land, and port and rail capacities have attracted green businesses and led it to focus on becoming the first Green Industrial City in the US. The City has demonstrated "green" leadership by adopting a goal of 80% reduction city-wide greenhouse gas emissions, establishing solar installation training in its youth jobs training programs and having the lowest solar permit fees in the Bay Area.

UC Berkeley
The University of California, Berkeley is one of the world’s premier education and research institutions. The University has embraced sustainability as a core area of research across departments and as a focus of campus operations. In April, UC Berkeley Chancellor Robert Birgeneau committed the campus to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2014.
CARB Hears a Unified Message - “Land Use Matters!” The California Air Resources Board (CARB) issued a Climate Change Draft Scoping Plan in June of this year that provided a first look at how the CARB plans to meet the AB 32 32 mandated goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions in California to 1990 levels by 2020. This means reducing emissions by 169 million metric tons of carbon dioxide over the next 12 years – a 30% reduction from current levels.

Most greenhouse gas emissions in California come from cars and light trucks followed by electricity use in buildings. While the new plan is aggressive in its targets for energy, assigning over 50 million metric tons of reductions to renewable energy and conservation, it does little to address the land use/transportation connection. This category of local government and regional action was assigned emission reductions of a mere 2 million metric tons.

A series of hearings on the draft plan, held this summer in Fresno, Los Angeles, Sacramento, Santa Clara, and San Diego, offered the public a chance to comment. CARB staff report that the vast majority of the comments submitted at these hearings related to the CARB plan for addressing transportation/land use in the built environment. Complaints were registered from local elected officials, land use planners, transit operators, environmental organizations, academicians, open space preservation proponents, and even progressive developers.

There was also a quite unexpected outpouring of concern from the public health community. According to a joint letter submitted by multiple health-related organizations, “[b]y assigning only minimal emission reduction targets to local government land use and transportation policies, CARB misses a critical opportunity to spur meaningful change in the built environment to mitigate climate change and improve the public’s health.”

At a recent CEQA workshop held by the Local Government Commission in Riverside, a spokesperson from the CARB reiterated the concerns expressed at the hearings about the low number in the land use/transportation column, and reported, “[w]e agree.” The revised plan is due in October and will be adopted by the CARB in November.

CA Legislature Addresses Climate Change and Land Use: One explanation for the light touch undertaken at CARB to address transportation and land use may have been a bill introduced in the legislature – action which CARB staff hope will help offer policy guidance. Negotiations on the bill, SB 375, was completed in the final minutes of a two-year session and passed by both houses. As of this writing it has not been signed by the Governor.

According to the Wall Street Journal, SB 375 if signed, “would be the nation’s most comprehensive effort to reduce sprawl. It would loosely tie tens of billions of dollars in state and federal transportation subsidies to cities’ and counties’ compliance efforts to slow the inexorable increase in driving.” Language in the bill addressing the use of transportation funds is not clear at this point, but Senator Steinberg reports there will be new legislation introduced next year to provide more specifics.

One component of the bill does have some immediate promise for encouraging development that reduces auto dependence and greenhouse gas emissions. The measure exempts from CEQA or provides streamlined CEQA analysis for projects that are consistent with regional plans, have at least 20 units per acre, and are within one half mile of transit.

Innovative Palm Desert Plan To Reduce Energy Consumption: Speakers from the CARB participating at Local Government Commission workshops continue to emphasize the critical role of local governments in addressing global climate change, noting that California cities and counties have traditionally been at the forefront in taking aggressive action and developing innovate solutions to environmental problems. This month, another example of this leadership comes from the City of Palm Desert.

To implement an aggressive five-year plan to cut energy use in the city by 30 %, the City made history this month with the creation of one of the first city-sponsored energy efficient loan programs, made possible under Assembly Bill 811. Signed into law in July, it allows cities to set up a low-interest loan programs to help residents finance big-ticket energy items such as efficient air conditioners and solar panels, with a long-term payback plan linked to property taxes. The City is jump-starting the program with $2.5 million in general fund reserves, offering residents a 7 % interest rate with terms up to 20 years. Nearly 300 residents are already on the waiting list to take advantage of the program.

The Palm Desert measure is similar to a program already put in place by the City of Berkeley, reported in the July 2008 issue of Livable Places Update.

Quote of the Month: Ronald Brownstein writes in his column for the National Journal Magazine, “Energy policy and development policy must converge if the U.S. is to meaningfully confront the intertwined challenges of climate change and dependence on foreign oil.”