



Testimony to Redistricting Commission, May 24, 2011

The San Francisco Bay Area has several unique geographic features that have shaped natural groupings of communities, and which also place large constraints on the practical shape of districts. Therefore, we recommend that the Commission begin by drawing lines there, starting at the southern foot of the Golden Gate Bridge, and then work to match up lines from this region to those of other regions.

These geographic constraints made the job of drawing the lines easier in some ways and also challenging. There is less room to maneuver. It is like solving a big puzzle. Happily, we were able to develop boundaries that honor local community interests, minimize splitting of cities, and create groupings that make sense to the local people. We believe these lines will be favored by the general populace of local communities that are involved.

In drawing these lines, a priority for us was keeping coastal communities together. We also had strong consideration for neighborhoods, for city and county boundaries, for the demographics of the communities, and for public transit connecting the areas. In urbanized areas such as the Bay Area, highest priority was given to what locals felt constituted the areas their community has the closest association with, and our lines were guided by geographic features that naturally separate the communities.

So, let's start at the foot of the Golden Gate Bridge.

San Francisco County, at the tip of the peninsula, is an entity unto itself. The first principle for drawing lines is that the San Francisco districts should not cross the bay to either Marin or Alameda counties. There is a \$6 toll on the Golden Gate Bridge to Marin County, and a \$5 toll on the Bay Bridge to Oakland. Residents of Oakland and Marin County have a distinct community identity and do not wish to be grouped with San Francisco.

San Franciscans have a strong sense of the city as an operational unit, and while they have a general sense that the eastern part of the city is different from the west, we found there were not any strong opinions on which parts of the city go best with the other parts. As we did not have a strong rationale on how to draw lines to divide the city, we are not suggesting a specific line to divide San Francisco. We leave it to other groups to inform the commission on how the line separating the two San Francisco districts should be drawn.

Instead we will consider the city as a whole. Based on population, one of the San Francisco districts will need to include approximately 145,000 people in San Mateo County. We have drawn a boundary that would provide approximately that number of people to add to a San Francisco assembly district.

San Mateo County

Daly City has very little coastal activity or awareness, and was built out to the bluff edges in Westlake in the 1940s and 50s. In terms of environment, housing stock, demographics, and population density, Daly City would be considered to have much in common with San Francisco.

The BART transit line runs through San Francisco and into Daly City, Colma, South San Francisco, San Bruno, as does the I-280 corridor. They are also connected to San Francisco by Mission St and Mission Rd, the original Mission route through the area that well predates the freeways and becomes El Camino Real.

Residents of Filipino heritage constitute more than 40% of Daly City's population, the largest Filipino community in a mid-size city in the U.S. Communities of Filipino Americans also reside in the southeastern part of San Francisco, the western part of South San Francisco, and part of San Bruno, but very few in Pacifica. The housing construction in the southeastern part of San Francisco is similar to that of houses in Daly City. Colma is a town that mostly consists of cemeteries, and has a large Hispanic population.

Much of Brisbane is built on the San Bruno Mountain hillside facing north toward San Francisco and they have a lot of social affinity with San Francisco. On the other side of San Bruno Mountain State Park, South San Francisco is built up on the hillsides facing south and east, with newer developments in the northeastern part of the section.

Both the Caltrain commuter rail line (which runs from Gilroy in Santa Clara County to San Francisco) and Hwy 101 pass through the east side of San Bruno, South San Francisco, and Brisbane en route to San Francisco. There are Caltrain station stops in the eastern part of San Bruno and South San Francisco, and a stop close to Brisbane (Bayshore station) in the very southernmost part of San Francisco. The eastern portion of South San Francisco has different demographics and neighborhood characteristics than some neighborhoods in the western portion. We paid attention to school district boundaries for the western portion in drawing the line.

Coastal San Mateo County - like all of the California coast - is governed by either the California Coastal Act or a Coastal-Commission-Certified Local Coastal Program (LCP) that functions as a localized version of the Act, which addresses specific local zoning issues. The LCPs use somewhat different methodologies and definitions for local coastal resources (wetlands, plants, etc.)

Starting from the north, Daly City has only rare circumstances that cause involvement with the California Coastal Act due to the fact that the City was built-out to the bluff edges in the '40s and the '50s.

The coastal communities of San Mateo and Santa Cruz County are governed by separate local coastal programs.

The Sierra Club considers it very important to keep sets of coastal communities intact. The coast line in Santa Cruz County includes part of Monterey Bay, and it is especially critical to keep the Monterey Bay coastline area in both Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties together to preserve their ability to protect the Monterey Bay.

The southern part of San Mateo County includes Sand Hill Road in Menlo Park, which is famous for its concentration of venture capital firms. There are also many venture capital firms in neighboring Palo Alto, which is home to Stanford University. The venture capitalists and associated company CEOs for the most part live in Menlo Park, Woodside, Atherton, Palo Alto, Los Altos Hills and Los Altos. Many of the startup companies that they have funded are in Santa Clara County, especially in Palo Alto, Mountain View, and Sunnyvale.

East Palo Alto has a completely different socioeconomic demographic and ethnic makeup than most of the communities that surround it. The majority of its residents are Latino (about 65% of the population), non-Hispanic African American, or Pacific Islander. It has similar socioeconomic demographics with the largely Mexican North Fair Oaks area (which is about 73% Hispanic), an unincorporated area that has a postal address of Menlo Park, as well as the area known as East Menlo Park which is comprised of the Menlo Park neighborhoods located to the east of highway 101. Children in East Palo Alto and North Fair Oaks attend schools in Redwood City, rather than in the other much wealthier communities to the south. The neighborhood areas in western Redwood City closer to Alameda de Las Pulgas, and to the south and west of that road, are generally comprised of single-family homes and are wealthier than the areas close to El Camino Real or the downtown and eastern areas. Alameda de Las Pulgas roughly demarcates the beginning of the ascent into the hills. Compared to most of the Redwood City area to the west of El Camino Real, there is a higher concentration of Hispanics residing in the area roughly outlined by Highway 84/Woodside Rd, Valota Rd, Jefferson Ave and El Camino Real.

Residences along El Camino Real in Redwood City, and in downtown and by the railroad tracks downtown are primarily comprised of multi-unit housing. East Palo Alto and the North Fair Oaks area contain many single family homes.

Santa Clara County

What used to be called the Valley of Hearts' Delight, consisting mainly of orchards and other agriculture, is now what is commonly referred to as the Silicon Valley, which is generally considered to comprise an area from Menlo Park to San Jose, although it is sometimes considered to extend to Redwood City to the north and also to Fremont in the east bay.

Sunnyvale is the second largest city in the county after San Jose. Sunnyvale is home to many of the workers in the Silicon Valley area, and many of them commute to Mountain View and Palo Alto.

Residents in Sunnyvale tend to conduct most of their personal errands within the city, rather than traveling to the downtown of the smaller city of Santa Clara. The housing prices in the city of Santa Clara are generally lower than in Sunnyvale.

The Santa Clara County Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) is the Congestion Management Agency for Santa Clara County and is governed by a board of directors that are partly selected based on groupings of cities. The cities of Palo Alto, Los Altos Hills, Los Altos, and Mountain View, Sunnyvale and Santa Clara comprise one such grouping of the VTA. The cities of Campbell, Cupertino, Los Gatos, Monte Sereno, and Saratoga comprise another grouping.

Cupertino, home to Apple, has a population that is 63% Asian American. The city of Sunnyvale, to its north, has a population that is much more mixed when it comes to ethnicities and races.

San Jose has large Latino and Vietnamese populations and is generally diverse. There is a main transit corridor that runs along Santa Clara Street which becomes Alum Rock Avenue and is served by buses 22 and 522. Thus the downtown has a close connection to the area to the east. The division between the downtown and the southern and northern neighborhoods of the city is less distinct, but is generally considered to be around Alma Ave. and perhaps Story Road to south and Maybury Road to the north.

San Jose, at about population one million is the tenth largest city in the U.S., having edged out Detroit a few years ago. San Jose grew very rapidly in the 1980's, mostly by annexing surrounding jurisdictions. Part of the hills flanking Morgan Hill are incorporated into San Jose. The neighborhoods that were incorporated into San Jose by being annexed have largely retained their unique character and neighborhood orientation. Residents in the western half of San Jose, to the west of the Guadalupe River, generally consider themselves as primarily identified with their local neighborhood and as having affinity with the other neighborhoods in the western part, such as Cambrian Park, or neighboring cities such as Campbell or Cupertino rather than with the other parts of the vast sprawl of San Jose. Residents of the Cambrian Park neighborhood of San Jose frequent downtown Los Gatos and consider themselves as having a close association with Los Gatos.

Los Gatos, Saratoga, and Monte Sereno contain many large multi-million dollar mansions and estates. Cupertino and Saratoga consider themselves to have a close association as "west valley" cities.

Los Gatos is separated from Santa Cruz County by the Santa Cruz Mountains. The Los Gatos area and Santa Cruz County have completely separate media markets and the residents of the two areas do not consider themselves to share a common community. Even the Lexington Hills area within unincorporated Santa Clara County, between Los Gatos and Santa Cruz, is considered remote and is not closely tied to the Los Gatos community.

Santa Cruz County

As previously stated, the Sierra Club considers it especially critical to keep the Monterey Bay coastline area in both Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties together and intact to improve their ability to protect the Monterey Bay. The environs of the coastal rivers in Santa Cruz County are of a much different character than the agricultural Salinas River in Monterey County. The threatened marbled murrelet nests in the mountains of Santa Cruz County.

Contra Costa County

For transportation planning purposes, Contra Costa County consists of four planning areas. The part of the county to the west of the ridgeline of the Oakland Berkeley Hills is one such planning areas—WCCTAC (Western Contra Costa Planning Advisory Commission). It is very different from the central, eastern, and southern parts of Contra Costa County, each of whom have their own transportation planning areas. The residents of the central/northern bedroom communities generally travel through the southern area to get to other areas, rather than traveling through the western area.

Just north of Hercules is a big hill. The residents on that hill go down the hill to buy their groceries in Hercules. They generally do not travel to Martinez to do their shopping. There is a \$5 toll to cross the Carquinez Bridge between Solano County to the north and Contra Costa County.

Alameda County

Oakland is currently divided into three Assembly districts. The Sierra Club proposal would divide Oakland into two. Given the geographic constraints, we had the good fortune that the likely boundary in Oakland would fall along what many would consider an appropriate dividing line, Broadway, a six-lane road which used to be a state highway, and Lake Merritt.

Residences in Oakland to the north side of Lake Merritt consist almost entirely multi-unit buildings, with many seniors mixed in with many young LGBT residents. The south/east side of Lake Merritt is a comprised of a mix of large and small single family homes.

The south/east side of Broadway tends to be a higher income area than the Temescal neighborhood on the north/west side of Broadway. Both are a mix of single-family and multi-unit housing. There is less of an income difference on the two sides the further east you go on Broadway, and also less diversity.

Sunol is generally considered to go with Fremont, as they are closely connected by the I-680 commute corridor. There is not much population in Sunol.

Commuters from the Tri-Valley cities of Danville, San Ramon, Dublin, Pleasanton, and Livermore traveling along I-580 have an especially big transportation impact on the cities of Castro Valley and San Lorenzo. It is a major commute corridor.

San Joaquin County

The cities of Stockton, Manteca, Lathrop, and Tracy share a common rail commuter line, the Altamont Commuter Express. The cities of Stockton, Manteca and Lathrop have a strong affinity for each other, a bit less with Tracy and very little association with the communities in the northeastern portion of Contra Costa County. The Altamont Commuter Express train runs from Stockton to San Jose with station stops in Manteca, Tracy, Livermore, Pleasanton, Fremont, Santa Clara, and San Jose.

Those San Joaquin County cities have a combined population of 459,748, almost enough to make an assembly district, although we did not define boundaries for such a district in our plan. The I-580 corridor is the second most congested commute corridor in the Bay Area.

Marin, Sonoma, and Napa Counties

Marin and Sonoma Counties share similar demographics, type of development and population densities, lifestyle, and land use—in particular ranches and vineyards. The counties have much more in common with each other than with San Francisco, and our members would very much like for those two counties to be kept together.

The Sonoma Marin Area Transit District (SMART) was formed by the state legislature as a recognition of a community of interest. The rail line administered by the district connects the principal cities of the two counties.

The Napa Valley is world-famous for its wineries and vineyards. While there are a few vineyards in Marin County, the wine tourism industry is concentrated in Napa, the town of Sonoma itself in the eastern part of the county, Yountville, St. Helena, Calistoga, and to a lesser extent, Healdsburg. It would make sense for a senate district to be formed that includes those three counties.

Mendocino, Humboldt, Del Norte, Trinity, and Siskiyou Counties

Mendocino, Humboldt, Del Norte strongly identify with the coast. Humboldt County is densely forested, mountainous, and rural. Humboldt County contains over forty percent of all remaining old growth Coast Redwood forests.

The mountains in the western part Siskiyou County such as Mount Shasta, and the Trinity Alps are all part of the same watershed with the coast. The Klamath, Scott, Salmon, Trinity and Sacramento Rivers all pass through Siskiyou County. The watershed consists of the mountains and the rivers that flow from them to comprise an ecosystem that sustain the fish and other life around the rivers, which in turn form the basis for economic activities.

The Eel River is the third largest watershed that is contained entirely within California, after the San Joaquin and Salinas Rivers.

Senate Districts

If Senate Districts are formed by nesting Assembly districts, we recommend the following pairings based on the Assembly districts whose boundaries we have defined.

- The two San Francisco Assembly districts, which we did not divide as stated previously.
- The two other Assembly districts that include San Mateo County, and the northwestern portion of Santa Clara County.
- The Assembly districts comprised of Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Benito Counties, and the southernmost portion of Santa Clara County.
- The Assembly districts comprised of Hayward, Union City, Newark, Fremont, and the northern eastern portion of Santa Clara County including Milpitas, Santa Clara, and north San Jose. The demographics of the portions of southern Fremont are very similar to that of Milpitas and north San Jose, with a large Chinese community. Those cities/areas also share common concerns with respect to the salt marshes and land use of the southern part of San Francisco Bay, such as the water control plant and landfill in that area.
- The two districts that include Oakland.
- The tri-valley area that encompasses the cities of Dublin, Pleasanton, Livermore, San Ramon and Danville should probably be paired with an assembly district, the boundaries of which are not defined in our plan, that includes Stockton, Manteca, Lathrop, and Tracy, to facilitate representation for improvements to the Altamont Commuter Express rail system.
- The district that includes Concord and Pittsburgh should be paired with a district, the boundaries of which are not defined in our plan, that includes Antioch, Brentwood, and Oakley. Those communities share a BART line and proposed BART extension in common.

Some benefits of our plan include:

- Our districts honor most local peoples' intuitive sense of logical groupings, or what communities have the most affinity for each other with respect to demographics, travel patterns, and common interests and issues.
- Splitting of cities is held to a minimum. County lines are followed where they make sense for communities of interest.
- Natural geographic features are taken into account in drawing the lines wherever they are most important in shaping the landscape and in defining an environmental community of interest.