

Scott HAGGERTY County is central to traffic solutions

Article Last Updated:12/15/2006 06:00:48 AM PST

ALAMEDA County's roads and freeways are the transportation hub of the Bay Area and indeed Northern California. With over 138 miles of freeway and over 50,000 hours of daily vehicle hours of delay (2005 data), for most of us getting from here to there means driving to or through Alameda County.

Are you stuck in traffic in Alameda County? You're not alone and are probably driving beside someone from Tracy, or Fairfield, or Gilroy, or San Mateo. That's probably why Alameda County's voters overwhelmingly supported November's Proposition 1B by a whopping 66 percent, because Alameda County's burden is unfair and in desperate need of state and regional money to support the traffic it carries.

Congestion increased 9 percent in the Bay Area from 2004 to 2005. And Alameda County, strategically positioned with a confluence of U.S., interstate and local highways, continues to bear about 40 percent of the congestion for the entire nine-county region.

Much of the talk around 1B has centered on one Bay Area project — the addition of a fourth bore for the Caldecott Tunnel along Highway 24. However, there are many other projects that are crucial to provide real relief for Alameda County.

-Enhanced freeway management systems on Interstate 80, the most congested corridor in the Bay Area, to reduce congestion and provide the real-time information needed to make smart directional and route decisions.

-The number of commuters traveling Interstate 580 across the Altamont Pass is rapidly approaching critical mass and the addition of car pool lanes in both directions would reward people who car pool with faster commutes, while easing the traffic volumes in other lanes, thus shortening commutes for those frustrated souls. This is the second most congested corridor in the Bay Area and a series of planned improvements will help open up this 12-mile bottleneck that carries a significant amount of regional traffic.

-Continued improvements to the nasty Nimitz Freeway (I-880), including extending southbound car pool lanes north to 98th Street and adding auxiliary lanes and other safety improvements.

If Proposition 1B is supposed to relieve congestion, improve safety, enhance mobility and improve highway and road connections throughout the Bay Area, then it makes sense that improving the traffic flow through Alameda County is a top priority for funds.

Given the county's position as a constant traffic choke point and source of frustration for drivers from Alamo to Brentwood to Castro Valley, getting traffic moving in Alameda County will be a huge step toward improving the lives of commuters from all over Northern California.

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