

A road to nowhere

Wednesday, February 21, 2007

LOS ANGELES is getting a raw deal in the first round of proposed grants from the state's \$19.9 billion transportation bond approved by voters last November. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa has every right to scream about the omission of funding for widening the perpetually clogged 405 Freeway over the Sepulveda Pass.

Now that we've established that we're not looking at this issue from a purely provincial perspective, let us add: The San Francisco Bay Area is also getting shortchanged in the first wave of funding recommendations issued by the California Transportation Commission's staff.

Under the staff's recommendations, Bay Area projects would receive less than half of the Northern California bond allotment, even though the region accounts for about 85 percent of the north's congestion. Many vital projects in this region -- from carpool lanes on I-580 to the Marin-Sonoma Narrows on Highway 101 -- were left off the list.

It seems the CTC staff steered an overly generous share of the funding to improving the "connectivity" of rural road systems. We empathize with the overall shortage of state and federal funding that has left rural projects waiting for many years, but the fact is that Proposition 1B was written and sold to voters as a remedy for "highly congested travel corridors in California."

The appointed commissioners took testimony on the recommendations -- including vehement objections from Los Angeles and the Bay Area -- and will make their final decision on Feb. 28.

Villaraigosa has gone all out to summon public pressure in Los Angeles, holding a news conference and personally distributing flyers with the CTC's phone number and e-mail address.

The commissioners also need to hear from Bay Area drivers who are frustrated about being stuck in traffic -- and thought they voted for a bond measure to do something about it.

Remind the California Transportation Commission that you voted for Proposition 1B to provide congestion relief. Call the commissioners at (916) 654-4245 or e-mail them at California_Transportation_Commission@dot.ca.gov

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2007/02/21/EDGRJN77L81.DTL>

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