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## Area transportation work set to benefit?

### Bay Area fares relatively well with Proposition 1B bond formulas

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Inside Bay Area

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When Bay Area voters helped approve the \$20 billion Proposition 1B transportation bond in November, it's likely few of them knew how well their area would make out when the money was divided up.

Fresh off of reaping nearly \$1.3 billion for area projects from the bond's highway program, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission has estimated with some confidence that it will pull in at least as much for public transportation projects, too.

Thanks to an allocation formula that uses transit agency revenue from fares and local taxes, the area's high-rolling entities are pulling in the bulk of that funding. San Francisco Muni, the Bay Area Rapid Transit District, Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority, AC Transit, Caltrain and Golden Gate Transit will reap a combined \$897.5 million.

"The Bay Area did very well under this formula," said Randy Rentschler, a spokesman and lobbyist for the commission. The advantage was that in terms of locally-generated revenue, the area represents about 51 percent of California's public transportation service.

The windfall is expected to translate into new rail cars for BART, help for a BART extension from the Fremont station to a new station in Warm Springs, funding for a subway tunnel in downtown San Francisco and a new bus rapid transit line along San Jose's busiest transit corridor.

BART's annual revenues from fares and its special tax district will qualify the agency for \$248.4 million, by MTC's estimate.

That will give a boost to several programs, especially to the agency's \$2.1 billion program to replace all of its 669 rail cars, which cost \$3 million apiece, said BART spokesman Linton Johnson.

"This will help us leverage more federal money" that must be matched by local or state funds, Johnson said.

In addition to replacing cars, BART directors have decided to fix up aging stations with better lighting, better walkways to access the station by foot, bike or wheelchair and possibly even high-definition video monitors to alert riders to train arrival times before they commit to passing through fare gates.

"We're going to use the Proposition 1B money to enhance the customer experience," Johnson said, "so stations look better, they feel better; we're basically modernizing the stations."

And Bob Franklin, who represents the hills of Berkeley and Oakland as well as San Leandro, San Lorenzo and part of Hayward, said he would like to see some of that money go toward cars with a third door, to speed loading and unloading and perhaps even platform doors in some stations to make them safer for rush-hour crowds.

The VTA plans to put some of its \$123.3 million toward the BART-to-Silicon Valley project, which is planned to extend from Warm Springs but ran into funding problems last year with the defeat of a county sales tax measure, said agency spokeswoman Jayme Kunz. The money would also help fund a light rail project along Capitol Expressway, she added.

Using the Bay Area's 19-percent share of the state's population, the second bond formula would give an estimated \$347 million to the MTC. Today an agency committee will consider a proposal to divide that and another \$72 million in other state funding.

The proposal would put \$169 million into Urban Core Transit Improvements, which comprises \$100 million for the Muni Central Subway project, \$24 million for a bus rapid transit line on VTA's busy Line 22 corridor and \$24 million for BART to Warm Springs.

Most of the remaining money, \$153 million, would go into the Lifeline transit program to benefit low-income riders who rely heavily on public transportation. That would be divided among the area's transit agencies by local congestion management agencies.

For the Bay Area alone, "there are approximately \$5 billion in transit needs over a 25-year period that are unfunded," Cohen said. "We hope that the transit agencies look at this money and prioritize fixing the system."

The new money hasn't softened the coalition's position, however, said Cohen, who noted that Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has reduced public transit funding in his annual state budget proposal.