

# Tri-Valley Herald

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# Bay Area grabs highway funding

## Traffic, housing top list of residents' concerns

■ Bay Area Council releases survey results

By Sara Steffens

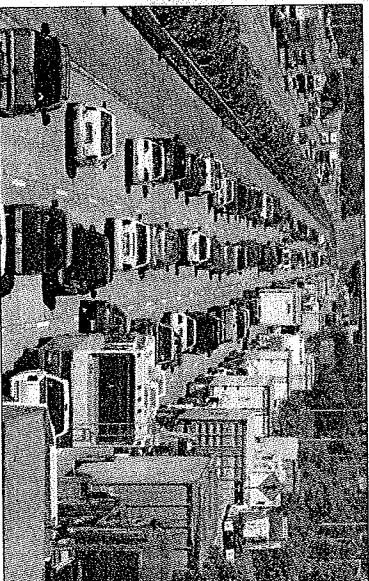
MEDIA/NEWS STAFF

Transportation remains the Bay Area's most pressing concern, residents have once again agreed in a regional poll. In the annual Bay Area Council poll, 33 percent of respondents cited issues such as

congestion, road repair and public transit as the region's most important problems.

"Traffic continues to be the mother of all problems in the Bay Area, that's unmissable," said Jim Wunderman, president and CEO of the Bay Area Council, which advocates for business in the region. "If year after year, the residents are

Please see **POLL**, News 11



JAY SOMMONSON — Staff file

**THE CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION** approved \$101.7 million for a carpool lane on westbound Interstate 580 running from Greenville Road in Livermore to Foothill Boulevard in Dublin.

■ \$177 million for rural bypass killed; I-580, I-880 to benefit

By Erik N. Nelson

STAFF WRITER

IRVINE — Bay Area motorists got a boost Wednesday from the California Transportation Commission, which voted \$1.29 billion in Proposition 1B bond money toward projects to uncork bottlenecks on Interstate 580, 880 and 80 as well as U.S. Highway 101 and state Highways 4 and 24.

The new money came at the expense of the U.S. Highway 101 Willis Bypass in Mendocino

County, which the commission killed, saying it didn't relieve much congestion for the \$177 million in bond money it required.

San Joaquin County also benefited from the commission's vote, receiving \$25 million for auxiliary lanes on heavily trafficked Interstate 205 through Tracy.

Commissioner James Ghelmeith said part of the reason he and four of his fellow commissioners voted to take the Willis project off the list was to accommodate the Tracy project.

"Those were tough decisions to make," Ghelmeith said of Please see **FUNDS**, News 11

# Bay Area grabs more funding for highways

## Local projects

The following traffic congestion reduction projects were among those approved for funding by the California Transportation Commission on Wednesday.

### Alameda County

- 1-880 southbound carpool lane, Alameda County \$34.6 million to expand carpool lane by 2.8 miles from Marina Boulevard in San Leandro to Hegenberger Road in Oakland. Total cost: \$108 million.
- New 580 interchange at Highway 84/Isabel Avenue in Livermore. \$68 million for new interchange make it easier for drivers to take Highway 84 from 580 in Livermore to 1-680 in Sunol by bypassing downtown Livermore. Total cost: \$153 million.
- Carpool lane on 580 eastbound, \$72 million for carpool lane 10.5 miles long from Hacienda Drive in Pleasanton to Greenville Road in Livermore. Total cost: \$153 million.
- 1-580 westbound carpool lane, \$101.7 million to carpool lane 18 miles from Greenville Road in Livermore to Foothill Boulevard in Dublin. Total cost: \$126.3 million.

- 1-80 Integrated Corridor Mobility Project between Bay Bridge and Carquinez Bridge, \$55.3 million for freeway entrance meeting ramps, surveillance cameras, traffic message signs and other measures to advise motorists and freeway operators how to minimize traffic delays. Total cost: \$87.7 million.

### Contra Costa County

- Caldecott Tunnel Fourth Bore: \$175 million to excavate another bore to Highway 24 so two bores will be open in each direction. Total cost: \$450 million.
- Highway 4 Widening, Antioch: \$85 million to widen Highway 4 from four to eight lanes from Somersville Road to Hillcrest Avenue, and from four to six lanes from Hillcrest Avenue to Route 160. Total cost: \$335 million.

### San Joaquin County

- Auxiliary lanes on I-205 in Tracy: \$25 million. Total cost: \$51.5 million.

## FUNDS, from News 1

taking from one project to give to others. "But there were some very important projects up in the Bay Area and in San Joaquin. That's not to say we didn't think there was a problem up in Willis. It's just that when you add up the number of minutes of delay, it pales in comparison."

The Bay Area's congestion project boosters were ebullient after the commission unanimously approved their list of projects.

"We're really ecstatic!" said Jim Wunderman, president of the Bay Area Council, a group of top business executives. "This meets or exceeds any expectation that we had and recognizes how important mobility is to our region."

The projects amounted to more than 70 percent of the \$1.79 billion allotted to Northern California — short of the 85 percent that Bay Area officials said reflected the area's share of congestion.

But it was a welcome boost from the numbers they were looking at just a week earlier, when it appeared that much of Northern California's share would go to remote rural highway projects.

"I'm happy that the commissioners did what we told the voters that we would do, and that's deal with congestion," said Alameda County Supervisor Scott Haggerty, who also sits on the Metropolitan Transportation Commission.

State commission staff had initially recommended only \$700 million for Bay Area projects, while funding \$500 million for rural highway "connectivity" projects, most of them in Northern California, on a Feb. 16 list.

Area officials argued that such projects robbed commuters of major congestion relief projects voters expected when they approved Proposition 1B in November.

After legislative leaders and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger demanded that the list be changed to favor congestion projects, and more of them, the staff put out a new list Monday with \$1.1 billion in Bay Area projects.

Bay Area officials continued to lobby for missing projects — including westbound carpool lanes on I-580 from Livermore to Dublin, the Novato Narrows on U.S. 101 connecting Marin and Sonoma counties and improvements for the I-880-1-280 interchange.

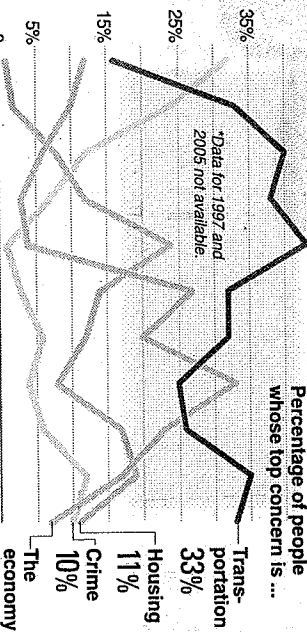
By the time the commission met at 9 a.m., it appeared that behind-the-scenes negotiations already had borne fruit.

Barely an hour into the meeting, the com-

# Traffic tops residents' concerns

## Spinning our wheels

Different issues have taken turns leading the concerns of Bay Area residents, but transportation has been a consistent worry for more than a decade.



Source: Bay Area Council survey of 600 random residents, in English and Spanish, Jan. 6-14. Sampling has a margin of error of ± 4 percentage points. DAVE JOHNSON/NEWS

Though transportation has long reigned as the region's top problem, crime could quickly loom larger in residents' minds, Wunderman said.

A reputation for crime could end up damaging the region's tourism and convention business, Wunderman said.

"We may need to do something to stem the tide of this and get the business community more involved," he said.

Steve Krull, Livermore's police chief and president of the California Police Chiefs Association, said public awareness of crime is influenced by a complex array of factors.

While overall crime rates have risen in many areas, homicide spikes in cities like Oakland and high-profile crimes are particularly likely to capture public attention, he said.

"In Livermore, although we didn't see a significant increase in crime overall, there's been a lot of publicity about the events we've had," he noted.

## POLL, from News 1

complaining about traffic and transportation, it's time to take them seriously."

Crime is climbing the list of regional priorities, this year's poll shows.

Ten percent of respondents said police protection, gangs, violence and related issues are the region's top concern, closely trailing the 11 percent who mentioned the cost and availability of housing.

"You've got Oakland and Richmond that have really demonstrated problems this year with increasing homicide rates," Wunderman said. "It ranks high in San Francisco, and there have been a lot of issues in that city, too."

Crime bumped the previous third-place answer, "the economy" in part due to its importance in Alameda County, where 19 percent of residents rank it as the region's top concern.

Across the Bay Area, Latinos were particularly likely to worry about crime, with 28 percent calling it the region's top concern.

Contra Costans, meanwhile, are more concerned about pollution than their neighbors: 14 percent call it the region's second-worst problem, while housing and the economy were chosen by 11 percent each.

North Bay residents were most concerned about traffic, with 41 percent calling it the region's top problem.

And among their Bay Area neighbors, San Franciscans were most likely to cite homelessness and panhandling as the top problem, with 14 percent giving this answer.