

# Bay Area must lobby for transportation funds

**T**HE Bay Area and the Valley have a few more days to raise heck and lobby the California Transportation Commission to make sensible decisions at its meeting Wednesday in Irvine.

The commission's staff apparently forgot that reducing congestion was the goal of the first big pot of bond money from last November's nearly \$20 billion set of transportation bonds. It was supposed to do so on an aggressive timeline.

The commission staff received recommendations from regional transportation agencies, such as the Metropolitan Transportation Commission that covers the nine-county Bay Area, as well as from the state's transportation agency, Caltrans.

Two weeks ago, the staff released recommendations that are remarkable for avoiding the state's most congested areas.

The commission staff set aside full funding for a bypass around Willits along Highway 101, while substantially reducing the recommended money from both Caltrans and MTC for Interstate 580 in the Livermore Valley. The Livermore Valley section of I-580 was slashed from the \$200 million recommended by the county to just \$60 million.

That's along the corridor that boasts the second and third worst-congested (afternoon and morning) commutes in the entire Bay Area.

Frankly, with 85 percent of all of the congestion in Northern California within the nine Bay Area counties, you have to wonder just what the geniuses on the commission staff were thinking.



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The commission staff recommended that the fourth bore of the Caldecott Tunnel receive all of the money sought. That's a project that is a high priority for Contra Costa County, but wasn't even on the Alameda County list.

Fortunately, it's up to the commissioners to finally approve the recommendations.

Alameda County has done a good job, in recent months, of speaking with one voice, but it's time for the Port-to-Port Coalition to speak loudly and clearly.

The coalition focuses on truck traffic and commuters between the Port of Oakland and the Port of Stockton in San Joaquin County along Interstate 5, Interstate 205, Interstate 580, Highway 238 and Interstate 880. The mixture of commuters and truck traffic makes that route crucial to the Northern California economy.

Giving it short shrift makes no sense politically or practically.

Call your mayor and your supervisor and urge them to lobby hard for common sense to prevail over whatever is passing for logic on the transportation commis-

sion staff. Maybe they had funny cookies for lunch that day.

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This is only the first round in the struggle to get the Bay Area an appropriate share of the bond money.

There's another \$2 billion pot of bond money for freight movement and inter-regional corridors.

The twin ports of San Pedro and Long Beach want all of that money and will have persuasive arguments for it. The air pollution, truck congestion and rail issues surrounding the two ports are daunting. And those yards handle nearly 45 percent of the total container shipments into the United States.

Oakland is a major port, but it's a tiny sack of concrete up against the San Pedro/Long Beach shipload.

The Port-to-Port coalition has a different set of challenges than the SoCal ports, suffering roads that are at least equally congested because of the commute element.

The I-580 corridor is a key connection for the port and also mixes in the trucks handling retail distribution from warehouses in San Joaquin County and commuters.

Bay Area elected and business leaders need to again step forward with a united voice to demand an appropriate share of this next pot of money. If they don't, it will be way too easy for the Southern California interests to scoop it all up.

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